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AMERICAN HERETICS AND SAINTS

AMERICAN HERETICS AND SAINTS

By
Wallace P. Rusterholtz

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AMERICAN HERETICS AND SAINTS

INTRODUCTION

1

This volume is largely an anthology of the writings and sayings of past and present significant, popular American religious liberals and progressives

The author intended to call all these American heretics and saints merely liberals, but that term is not strong enough or accurate enough for most of them. A liberal is defined in Webster's New International Dictionary as "one who favors greater freedom in political or religious matters." While all the persons who figure in this book are liberals in this strict sense, Roger Williams being one of the outstanding examples, they are also more than that.

A liberal is sometimes considered to be one who takes a middle ground between radical and extreme conservatives on the one hand and radical and extreme reformers on the other. In this sense of the word, liberals are middle-of-the-rovers, moderates, seekers of the happy medium. William Ellery Channing is one of the outstanding examples of this. Perhaps the best definition of this kind of liberal is contained in the lines of Alexander Pope, in his "Essay on Criticism" he is neither

" the last to lay the old aside,
Nor yet the first by whom the new is tried "

While many of those who figure in this volume are liberals in this sense, several of them perceive that this kind of liberalism does not always keep pace with the times, and so some of them have gone ahead of and beyond it.

A liberal is often considered to be one who is tolerant and gentle in his attitude towards those differing with him. Benjamin Franklin is one of the outstanding examples of this kind. While many of the persons who figure in this book are liberals in this sense, this quality is not so important now because it is a virtue which has been overdone by liberals. The lessening importance of this virtue is not due to an increasing tolerance in society, a development which might lessen the necessity for emphasis on religious tolerance. Paradoxically enough, the situation is quite the opposite. Conservative Fundamentalist religionists, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, are growing even less tolerant and more militant than they used to be. The traditional American separation of church and state, never complete and perfect, is more and more jeopardized.

Since the American heretics and saints who figure in this volume desire more than mere freedom, which is a means and not an end in itself, since most of them are more progressive and modern than merely moderate; and since many of them are not tolerant of oppression, superstition, and arbitrary authority, it seems better to term them not merely liberals but progressives. All progressives are liberals, but not all liberals are very progressive.

2

Progressives do not necessarily believe, with many Unitarians, in the automatic "progress of mankind onward and upward forever." They hope and work for progress, hence their name, but alert progressives at the present time feel pessimistic rather than optimistic about the future improvement and progress of the human race. If we are to maintain the American tradition of religious freedom and the scientific tradition of the inquiring mind, it is necessary that the aggressions of the reactionary churches be halted by a firm

stand on the part of liberals and progressives. Dr John Dewey, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Columbia University and by common consent, America's greatest living philosopher, Dr Harry Elmer Barnes, eminent historian and sociologist, Dr Charles Francis Potter, noted lecturer and author, and other alert liberals and progressives seriously doubt that any form of liberalism can survive without arming itself against the forces of religious, political, economic, and social conservatism and reaction. Dr Dewey recently wrote that "liberalism must now become radical," by which he meant that progressives must become aggressive, laying aside their lazy tolerance and shaking off their passive smugness, if they are to preserve liberalism and its values necessary to a civilization worthy of the name.¹

If the tragedy of triumphant religious and political reactionism is to be averted, liberals and progressives, without relaxing insistence upon unconditional freedom of conscience and worship for all, must use systematically the methods of education and peaceful persuasion to spread progressive thought. "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance,"² Jefferson is said to have declared, and, he could have added, it is also the price of liberalism and progress. He wrote in 1796 that "we are likely to preserve the liberty we have obtained only by unremitting labors and perils."³ Roger Williams' warning is still pertinent: "liberty of searching out truth [is] hardly got, and as hardly kept."⁴

It will not be enough for liberals to appeal to reason, for men in general are not reasoning creatures. The liberal and

¹ Dewey, John, *Liberalism and Social Action* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1935), 62.

² Quoted by Wendell Phillips, *Public Opinion*, January 28, 1852.

³ Jefferson, Thomas, *Writings* (ed. Albert E. Bergh, Washington, D. C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903), IX, 336.

⁴ Williams, Roger, "The Bloody Tenet Yet More Bloody," *Narragansett Club Publications* (Providence, R. I., 1866-1874), IV, 30.

progressive appeal must be rousing and emotional if it is to compete effectively with reactionary propaganda which relies successfully upon habit, custom, inertia, and mental laziness. The mass of mankind prefer the familiar and the customary. Conventional and familiar music is what the ear likes to listen to. The eye prefers traditional painting, with its familiar lines and colors. New ideas are even more disturbing to most people than are new music or pictures. New economic ideas are indiscriminately labelled Communism, new political ideas, anarchism or Bolshevism, new religious ideas, atheism. To many people, Communism, Bolshevism, and atheism are merely "everything that I don't believe in."

3

In making an appeal for liberalism and progressiveness on the basis not only of reason but also of emotion, experience, and tradition, nothing can be more effective in America than the personalities, characters, and utterances of these American heretics and saints. They span our national past as an unbroken apostatic succession of liberals and progressives from the early English settlement of the new world to the present moment. They have pointed the way, they have charted our course.

John Robinson described the liberal and progressive religious attitude for the following two centuries when, more than three hundred years ago, he conceived of spiritual evolution and declared to the Pilgrim fathers that "the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word."

When reliance on God's "holy word" as the infallible authority was undermined a century ago by the progressive wing of the Unitarianism of that time, Theodore Parker epitomized

⁵ Quoted by Winslow, Edward, "A Brief Narration," *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers* (ed. Alexander Young. Boston: Little and Brown, 1844), 397.

mized the new and enlarged liberal and progressive attitude in his favorite aphorism "Truth for authority, not authority for truth." "

The twentieth century progressive religious attitude is described by the Unitarian religious Humanist, Dr John H Dietrich, when he wrote that religious progressivism is a quality of mind, "of the forward-looking mind as opposed to the backward-looking mind, of the progressing mind as opposed to the static mind " " And, he should have added, of the aggressive as opposed to the passive mind. It is not enough to have a passion for truth ; there must also be a passion to make truth prevail.

It is the tradition of such a religious attitude in America, from its beginning in the progressive Congregational minister, John Robinson, to its present flowering in such religious Humanists as Dr John Haynes Holmes, Dr Charles Francis Potter and Dr John H Dietrich, with which this volume is concerned

4

While this volume is largely an anthology in which every person is made to speak for himself, it has something of the character of biography It consists of a series of sixteen essays devoted to prominent American religious liberals and progressives, four for each of four centuries These personalities are considered because of their heresy, their noble and useful character, and their political, economic, and sociological as well as theological progressiveness All mere theologians are excluded Only those are included who through character and personality, as well as knowledge and thought, have left their mark on progressive religion in America Nevertheless,

⁶ Quoted by Chadwick, John W , *Theodore Parker Preacher and Reformer* (Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1900), 110

⁷ Dietrich, John H , *The Significance of the Unitarian Movement* (Boston American Unitarian Association, 1927), 4

it has been the author's purpose to supply merely sufficient information about each person to provide the reader with a background against which to place his religious thought and teachings

Detailed analysis of the thought of these persons has purposely been avoided in the hope that they will speak for themselves. The critical judgments of others regarding them have usually been presented as carefully as the author's own. In fact, the author is perhaps almost more an editor than an author, although he has put himself into the preparation of the volume so heartily that the ideas of these persons now seem to him almost as much his as theirs.

The volume also has some of the character of a historical résumé of the development of liberal and progressive religion in America. It is not the purpose of the book, however, to present a continuous and complete history. Its primary emphasis is on outstanding individual religious contributions. If this were a history, it would have to include consideration of such denominations as the Unitarian and Universalist churches and the Ethical Culture and Free Thought movements. Such a history is beyond the scope of this book.

For religious liberals and progressives the book may claim to contain the American chapters of a new and universal Bible.

I

JOHN ROBINSON SPIRITUAL EVOLUTIONIST

1

THE first American religious liberal never set foot on American soil. He was the Reverend John Robinson, minister to the Pilgrims. His passage with part of his congregation on the "Mayflower" from Plymouth, England, to Plymouth, New England, was blocked partly because his religious opinions were too liberal for the London Puritan merchants who backed the Pilgrims financially in the colonization of New England.¹ Robinson was a modern Moses who never even saw the Promised Land, prevented from going to it not by God but by the worldly, not by his own timidity but by the machinations of his opponents.

Robinson was born in 1576 in Sturton, Nottinghamshire.² He was graduated from Cambridge University and entered the clergy of the Church of England, but he gradually became dissatisfied with the Church. He became an Independent, part way between the Separatists, who would separate themselves from the Anglican Church, and the Puritans, who would further purify or reform the established church and remain in it.³ He believed that separation was not necessary "from this or

¹ Robinson, *Works* (ed Robert Ashton. London: John Snow, 1851, 3 vols.), I, lvi-lviii. Bradford, William, "Dialogue," *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers* (ed Alexander Young. Boston: Little and Brown, 1844), 453n. Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation, 1606-1646* (ed William T. Davis. New York: Scribner, 1908), 202-203.

² For general biographical data on Robinson, I rely on Burgess, Walter H., *John Robinson: Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920).

³ *Works*, III, 378, also, 105, 353-354, 406.

that or any church, but only from the world." "Our faith is not negative nor [does it] consist in the condemning of others but in the edifying of ourselves" Although he was for a time rector of St Andrew's Church at Norwich, he led a group from his and other congregations to Amsterdam, Holland, in 1608 They settled more permanently in 1609 at Leyden, where they remained until 1620, when many of them migrated by way of England to New England Robinson died in Leyden in 1625.

His influence upon the church at Plymouth, and through that church upon the other churches of New England, was important He preached an impressive farewell sermon to his congregation when part of it embarked at Leyden, and he wrote a memorable pastoral letter which was read when it embarked at Plymouth, England To Wilham Brewster, formerly ruling elder of the Leyden church and leader of the new Plymouth church, he gave much advice For instance, in 1623 he wrote "Concerning the killing of those poor Indians" "oh! how happy a thing had it been, if you had converted some, before you killed any, besides, where blood is once begun to be shed, it is seldom stanchd of a long time after" The new Plymouth congregation looked to Robinson for spiritual guidance, as it had in Holland, and as long as he lived he was its spiritual leader. ¹

2

The historical significance of Robinson as the leader of the Pilgrims is underlaid by his philosophical significance as a religionist and thinker

⁴ Winslow, Edward, "A Brief Narration," *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, 399

⁵ Winslow, 400

⁶ Bradford, *History*, 172

⁷ *Ibid.*, 41 Ashton, Robert, "Memoir of the Life of the Reverend John Robinson," Robinson's *Works*, I, liv-lvi

He aspired to hold his mind open and receptive to new ideas "I profess myself always one of them, who still desire to learn further, or better, what the good will of God is"⁸ William Bradford, the excellent Pilgrim historian, wrote that Robinson was "never satisfied in himself until he had searched any cause or argument he had to deal in thoroughly and to the bottom, and we have heard him sometimes say to his familiars that many times, both in writing and disputation, he knew he had sufficiently answered others, but many times not himself, and was ever desirous of any light, and the more able, learned, and holy the persons were, the more he desired to confer and reason with them"⁹

The analogy between Moses and John Robinson is a tempting one, but nevertheless imperfect While Moses is recorded as having handed down the immutable law of God to his people, Robinson, in the supreme realm of truth, conceived the principle of evolution more than three hundred years ago He perceived, as Emerson was to declare, that truth is an "unbarrelable and unbottleable commodity"

In his farewell sermon to the Pilgrims at Leyden, Robinson is reported to have declared that "it is not possible the Christian world should have come so lately out of such thick antichristian darkness, and that full perfection of knowledge should break forth at once" He declared that he was "very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word" He said that the fact that Calvinists stuck where Calvin left them was "a misery much to be lamented", for, though Luther and Calvin were "precious shining lights in their times, yet God had not revealed his whole will to them, and were they now living . they would be as ready and willing to embrace further light, as that they had received"¹⁰ Perhaps this is the greatest compliment ever

⁸ *Works*, III, 103

⁹ Bradford, "A Dialogue," 452

¹⁰ Winslow, "A Brief Narration," 297

paid Calvin Robinson himself better deserved it when he declared, "Our Lord Christ calls himself truth, not custom" "

Many can perceive the limitations of their ancestors, but Robinson saw that not only his own generation but even he himself, as well, would turn out to have limitations. Wrote the Pilgrim, Edward Winslow, who recorded the farewell sermon, "he charged us before God and his blessed angels, to follow him no further than he followed Christ, and if God should reveal anything to us by any other instrument of his, to be as ready to receive it as ever we were to receive any truth by his [own] ministry" "

He was, indeed, "very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word," and his vision followed his congregation to the New England Plymouth which he never saw. Its church covenant proclaimed that the congregation would "walk in all [God's] ways, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavors, whatsoever it should cost them" "

Nevertheless, John Adams was right when he wrote in 1807, "It is greatly to be regretted that Robinson did not live to come over, for he probably would have had influence enough to have restrained the early emigrants from many extravagances which have diminished the reverence due to their general character" "

¹¹ Quoted by Sherman, Stuart Pratt, *The Genius of America* (New York: Scribner, 1925), 63

¹² Winslow, "A Brief Narration," 397

¹³ Bradford, *History*, 31

¹⁴ Ford, Worthington C., editor, *Statesman and Friend: Correspondence of John Adams with Benjamin Waterhouse, 1784-1822* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1927), 42

II

ROGER WILLIAMS THE FIRST AMERICAN

I

IN THE early springtime of New England history, the voice of the radical was heard in the land. The new "truth and light" which John Robinson had heralded was "hidden under a bushel" of intolerance and dogma in the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies. Roger Williams was the first to "set it upon a candlestick" when he founded, and, in the broadest sense of the word, formed a settlement and government "on principles of liberty far in advance of any other state before or since his time".¹ Williams let his new light shine before men, he truthfully declared, "I have not hid within my breast my soul's belief".² His was a conservative boast when he wrote in 1654 to his friend, Sir Henry Vane, that in Providence "we have long drunk of the cup of as great liberties as any people that we can hear of under the whole heaven".³

Heretic even among heretics but no dour Puritan, Williams was a gentleman, philosopher, and statesman in the wilderness. Like his friend, the great liberal Puritan poet John Milton, he was a product of both the Renaissance and the Reformation. He was liberal and learned enough to befriend Urquhart, the translator of Rabelais, and he knew not

¹ Ernst, James E., "The Political Thought of Roger Williams," *University of Washington Publications in Language and Literature* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1929), VI, 72.

² "The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for Cause of Conscience," *Narragansett Club Publications* (ed Samuel L. Caldwell, Providence, Rhode Island, 1867), III, 12.

³ *Ibid*, VI, 268.

only Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Dutch but also the "heathen French" language. He was broad enough to recognize the validity of the flesh as well as the spirit, to appreciate the things of the world as well as of heaven. He enjoyed wine and tobacco. He appreciated music, literature, and the other arts, even to the extent of admitting their value in religious worship. According to James Ernst, who is the greatest authority on Williams, he was "equally at ease amid the refinements and culture of an English drawing-room, or at the savage court of an Indian sachem." "

Born in 1603, near London, of a substantial family, he made the first step in his religious progress when he came under the influence of Puritan preachers at the age of eleven. Although he was persecuted at home for his views, his Puritanism was thoroughly established during his years at Cambridge University. His contact in England in 1629 with John Cotton and Thomas Hooker, who were later to be among his American prosecutors, led to his conversion to Separatism in the following year. He emigrated to America in that year, preceding Cotton and Hooker by three years, and refused an offer of the position of teacher in the Boston church because "I durst not officiate to an unseparated people." The position was accepted by Cotton when he arrived. Williams went as assistant to the minister at the more independent church in Salem, only to be forced out for his Separatism by the authorities of the Bay colony. He went down to the Plymouth colony as assistant to the minister, only to leave when he found that it was not thoroughly Separatist. According to Ernst, he was "the first important rigid Separatist in New England." Having turned down the three leading churches there, he became in 1632 the first missionary to the Indians. This was

⁴ Ernst, James E., *Roger Williams: New England Firebrand* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 248-249. I rely mainly on Ernst for biographical data on Williams.

⁵ Williams, *Letters, Nar. Club Pub.*, VI, 356.

⁶ Ernst, *Roger Williams*, 74-75.

fourteen years before John Eliot began his renowned missionary labors among them. Williams returned to Salem in 1633, however, at the second invitation of the congregation.

He had been a heretic, even in Massachusetts, from the beginning, but he now became known as a "firebrand." Cotton Mather wrote years later that he was an "incendiary," having "less light than fire." In September, 1634, "a day of public humiliation" and prayer was proclaimed throughout the Bay colony against the possibility of the revocation of the charter, and Williams preached at Salem on eleven "sins" for which he believed that God was punishing the colony.⁷ It was for these "sins" of the colony rather than for his own that he was tried, convicted, and sentenced on September 3, 1635 to banishment. Ironically, Governor Haynes, who passed sentence on him, and Thomas Hooker, in whose church at Newtowne (now Cambridge) his trial was held, were themselves respectively to be banished and to emigrate in dissatisfaction in the following year. Williams founded Rhode Island, and Hooker founded Connecticut.

Among the sins of Massachusetts, according to Williams, were the acceptance of the king's patent, claiming right to America by discovery, instead of by purchase from the Indians, punishment of religious offenses by civil authorities, enforced church attendance, affinity with the Church of England, enforced taking of oaths in civil procedure for non-church-members, and clerical synods of a Presbyterian tendency. In short, he differed with Massachusetts in desiring that churches be independent of each other and separate from the state, that there be freedom of conscience, and that the state be a political democracy and not a theocracy controlled by the churches.⁸

⁷ Mather, Cotton, *Magnalia Christi Americana, or the Ecclesiastical History of New England, 1620-1698* (Hartford, Connecticut: Silas Andrus, 1820. 2 vols.), II, 430-431.

⁸ Cotton, John, "A Reply to Mr. Williams," *Nar. Club Pub.*, II, 33.

⁹ Ernst, *Roger Williams*, 107, 63, 136.

As the late Dr W H P Faunce of Brown University wrote, the Puritans "had come to escape a tyranny which they had found hateful and to establish a tyranny which they believed beneficial and essential" To the Puritans, "Free religion was as abhorrent as the doctrine of free love in our age. It meant the loosing of all ties, the undermining of the entire social and legal order" ¹⁰ When Williams challenged their religious and political tyranny and advocated religious and political freedom, the Puritans were scandalized, modern judgment, however, was expressed by Parrington when he wrote that Williams was "the truest Christian amongst many who sincerely desired to be Christian" ¹¹

Williams was ordered to leave Massachusetts within six weeks of the day of his sentence, but the decision was later modified to permit him to remain until spring When he continued "to draw others unto his opinions" it was decided in January 1636 to send him back to England He barely eluded his prospective captors, spent the rest of the winter with his Indian friend, Chief Massasoit of the Wampanoags, and in the following summer, with some white friends, founded the colony of Providence There he bought land from the Indians and established a community which, through his continued efforts, received from Parliament in 1644 "a free charter of civil incorporation and government" as the Providence Plantations "It was the first free charter of government issued to any English colony," according to Ernst, the others being either trading company or proprietary patents "

¹⁰ Faunce, W H P, "Roger Williams and His Doctrine of Soul Liberty," *Pioneers of Religious Liberty in America* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1903), 66-67

¹¹ Parrington, Vernon Louis, *The Colonial Mind, 1620-1800 (Main Currents in American Thought, I* New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927 3 vols.), I, 64

¹² Winthrop, John, *Journal* (ed James K Hosmer), New York: Scribner, 1908 2 vols.), January 1636

¹³ Ernst, *Roger Williams*, 230

Through his personal friends, the Earls of Warwick and Pembroke, the Lords Saye and Wharton, Sir Arthur Haselrig, Sir Henry Vane, Oliver Cromwell, and others, Williams dictated to Parliament the terms of the charter and got all for which he asked. Even the difference in environment between England and New England was conceded to be a qualifying factor, the "laws, constitutions, and punishments [of the colony to] be conformable to the laws of England, so far as the nature and constitution of the place will admit."

2

It was in the establishment of this government as "a shelter for the poor and persecuted," which he not only founded but in which he held various offices, ranging from president and moderator of the General Assembly to that of deputy from Providence, from the time of its formation in 1636 almost until his death in 1683, that Williams developed and practised his theories and realized many of his ideals. Although he was a dreamer, wrote Dr Faunce, he was "also a true leader of men." He was "no mere theorist, but the founder of a state." Masson, in his great biography of Milton, envisioned Williams as "a spiritual Crusoe," "of bold and stout jaw, but with the richest and softest eyes," "the most extreme and outcast soul in all America." But Faunce found a more apt parallel between Williams and Columbus. The latter, "by actually sailing over the horizon, changed geographical speculation into tangible fact. Roger Williams was a Columbus who dared to incarnate what he believed into actual enterprise, and to pass from theory into practise."

¹⁴ *Rhode Island Colonial Records* (ed John R Bartlett Providence, R I, 1856), I, 145

¹⁵ Williams, letter to Major Mason, 1670 *Nar Club Pub*, VI, 344

¹⁶ Faunce, 70-71

¹⁷ Masson, David, *Life of John Milton* (London and New York Macmillan, 1859-1872 6 vols), II, 563

¹⁸ Faunce, 70-71

Although he loved retirement, he wrote that he desired "not to sleep in security and dream of a nest which no hand can reach I cannot but expect changes" " He translated theory into action, he expected changes, desired them, inaugurated them

"Out of his long speculations emerged a theory of the commonwealth that must be reckoned the richest contribution of Puritanism to American political thought," wrote Parrington ¹⁹ Gooch wrote that if democracy means "not only a government in which the preponderant share of power resides in the people, but a society based on the principles of political and religious freedom, Rhode Island beyond any other of the American colonies is entitled to be called democratic" " ²⁰ The early Federal historian, George Bancroft, wrote, "More ideas which have become national have emanated from the little colony of Rhode Island, than from any other" " ²¹ Ernst wrote that the Declaration of Independence added nothing to the revolutionary theories of Williams "

Williams' political, religious, and social theories were set forth unsystematically in his published writings and letters His principal work was "The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for Cause of Conscience," which he wrote and published in England in 1644 on his successful political mission to secure a charter for Providence While he was writing it, he not only completed his negotiations for the charter but also devoted himself to securing fuel for the London poor " ²² The nature of the book, and especially the circumstances of the case, suggest Thomas Paine and his "Rights of Man," which also was written during a sojourn in England after its author

¹⁹ Letter to John Winthrop, *Nar Club Pub*, VI, 6 (1636)

²⁰ Parrington, I, 66

²¹ Gooch, G P, *History of Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, England University Press, 1927), 72

²² Quoted by Ernst, *Roger Williams*, 277

²³ *Ibid*, 426

²⁴ *Nar Club Pub*, IV, 103-104

had become an American, similarly was designed for English consumption, and likewise was condemned to the flames by Parliament. It was written in answer to John Cotton, who in turn had answered a tract favoring religious freedom which Williams had sent him. It was also Williams' answer to a tract entitled "A Model of Church and Civil Power," in which the theocratic regime of the Massachusetts Bay colony was defended.²⁵

In the same year, he wrote and published in England another tract entitled "Queries of Highest Consideration," which was a plea for freedom of conscience addressed to both the Presbyterian and Independent parties in England.²⁶ John Cotton replied in 1647 to "The Bloody Tenet" in a tract entitled "The Bloody Tenet Washed White in the Blood of the Lamb," and to this reply Williams published his answer in his "Bloody Tenet Yet More Bloody" which was published in England in 1652.²⁷

In these writings, and in his letters, he presented his theory of the origin, nature, and purpose of the state, of the relation of church and state, and of the relation of the individual to both of these. He believed that all legitimate government must arise, not through divine ordination, but a social compact.²⁸ He differed from Hobbes and Locke in not considering its origin to be in the past, and he differed from Burke in not considering it irrevocably binding for the future. Rather, according to Parrington, Williams considered it "flexible, responsive to changing conditions, continually modified to meet present needs." "A rigid constitution, augmenting in authority with age and veneration, Roger Williams feared as acutely as did Paine or Jefferson."²⁹

²⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 14-15

²⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 9

²⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 1

²⁸ Ernst, "Political Thought," 37

²⁹ Parrington, I, 66-72

Williams wrote that "the civil magistrate, whether kings or Parliaments, states, and governors, can receive no more [authority] . . . than what the people give, and are therefore but the eyes and hands and instruments of the people", "the sovereign, original, and foundation of civil power lies in the people" Consequently, "a people may erect and establish what form of government seems to them most meet for their civil condition It is evident that such governments as are by them erected and established, have no more power, nor for no longer time, than the civil power or people consenting and agreeing shall betrust them with This is clear not only in reason, but in the experience of all commonwealths, where the people are not deprived of their natural freedom by the power of tyrants " " Natural rights, natural freedom, the state conceived as a human institution and as the instrument of the people, are ideas which we now accept as a matter of course, but they were not less than revolutionary in Williams' day—quite as revolutionary then as Communism now

He considered the function of the state, to put it in Ernst's phrase, that of "a great public service corporation " " Williams, according to Ernst, was "in harmony with [our] contemporary publicists and jurists who consider the state a public service agent or corporation serving a free citizenship in society " " Williams advocated that the state care for orphans, widows, the poor and insane, that it build roads and bridges, that it regulate trade, commerce, industry, and the liquor traffic, that it protect cattle from wild beasts, and that it settle controversies of various kinds between citizens " He might well have monopolized for himself the land and resources of the colony which he founded, but, instead of doing

³⁰ "The Bloody Tenet," *Nar Club Pub* , III, 355

³¹ *Ibid* , III, 249-250

³² Ernst, "Political Thought," 72

³³ *Ibid* , 137

³⁴ *Ibid* , 140

so, he freely accorded economic as well as political and religious equality to all. ³⁵

Despite this broad and beneficial function of the state, he insisted upon internal civil limits to its power. The Rhode Island constitution of 1647 contained a bill of rights, abolished primogeniture, provided for frequent elections, a president who could be deposed or replaced at will, a unicameral legislature, joint and individual initiative of statutes, including even the constitution itself, and compulsory referendum. The courts were constituted as mere trial courts and could not form or interpret law. ³⁶ Not long after the Constitution went into effect, whites, Indians, and Negroes were put on the same civil basis, ³⁷ although later, Negro slavery flourished in Rhode Island more than in any other northern state. Williams advocated the recall of all laws, including the Constitution and arbitration of disputes among citizens. ³⁸

As Thomas Jefferson later was to do, he considered civil disobedience not only lawful but a duty, if authority were usurped or tyranny established. ³⁹ He never forgot that the purpose of his government was, as Faunce expressed it, "to reconcile extreme individualism with social and political co-operation." In Massachusetts, the laws had to be modified to create liberty. In Rhode Island, liberty had to be defined and directed in order to establish law. ⁴⁰ Rhode Island remained consistently democratic, being the first of the colonies to legislate against slavery, the first to declare independence of Great Britain, the last to adopt the Federal Constitution. ⁴¹

³⁵ *Nar. Club Pub.*, VI, 5. *Rhode Island Historical Tracts* (Providence, R. I., Sidney S. Rider, 1881), XIV, 53-59. Ernst, "Political Thought," 158.

³⁶ *Rhode Island Colonial Records*, I, 157-208.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 243.

³⁸ Gooch, 73-74. Ernst, "Political Thought," 71-72, 81. Farrington, I, 66-72.

³⁹ *Nar. Club Pub.*, III, 355, 418, 96, 365, 415, 419, 297, IV, 300, VI, 4, 267. Ernst, "Political Thought," 44, 197.

⁴⁰ Faunce, 76.

It never ratified the Eighteenth Amendment, but it was the third to ratify the Twenty-first (repealing) Amendment " The eminent historian, Edward Channing, wrote that in Rhode Island "individualism always had its highest development " "

At the same time that Williams provided general internal limitations on the civil power of the state, he provided specific limitations in favor of local government as against the federal government of the colony The Rhode Island constitution of 1647, according to Ernst, had an "epoch-making" federal system which divided power between the colonial and community governments "

Not only did Williams provide both general and local internal limitations on the civil power of the state, but he also recognized its external limitations arising from its relation to other states Ernst wrote that he was "the forerunner of the most modern speculations on the relation of states in an international society", in his interest in international (inter-colonial) relations "because of their bearing upon the individual" in society, Williams was the Thomas Paine of his century " His theory of international relations arose from his efforts to check the aggression of Massachusetts Bay colony on the territory of Rhode Island "

Williams believed that defensive war is justified, " but he wrote, "I fear the event [result] of the justest war " " He preserved peace many a time between Massachusetts and the Indians, and in 1654 he wrote to the General Court of Massachusetts that since "the God of peace and Father of mercies made these natives more friendly in this, than our native

⁴¹ *New York Times*, May 2, 1933, p 1

⁴² Channing, *History of the United States*, (New York Macmillan, 1905-1925 6 vols), I, 398

⁴³ Ernst, "Political Thought," 149

⁴⁴ *Ibid* , 87, 117

⁴⁵ *Ibid* , 91

⁴⁶ *Ibid* , 115

⁴⁷ Letter to John Winthrop, 1675 *Nar Club Pub* , VI, 378

countrymen in our own land," how can it "suit with Christian ingenuity to take hold of some seeming occasions for their destruction?"⁴⁸ He advocated the arbitration of all disputes, both internal and international, "held that no state can subdue another by conquest or encroach on it by discovery or exploration, and believed in the use of treaties, agreements, leagues, mediation and compromise as instruments of international relations"⁴⁹

3

He considered that the state has not only internal and external civil limitations, but also ecclesiastical limitations. The state, in his opinion, is a human institution while the church is a divine one, and he was anxious that the secular and religious, the sacred and profane, the worldly and the spiritual, be kept separate. He wrote that the authority of the state extends only over "the bodies and goods and outward state of men,"⁵⁰ and it should merely "encourage and countenance the church, yea and protect the persons of the church from violence, disturbance."⁵¹ There must, he believed, be complete separation of church and state. For the church to have more connection with the state than he had just admitted is "to pull God and Christ, and spirit out of heaven, and subject them unto natural, sinful, inconstant men."⁵² For, "when in matter of worship we ascribe the absolute headship and government to the magistrate and yet take unto ourselves power to judge what is right in our own eyes, and to judge the magistrate in and for those very things, wherein we confess he has power to see us do our duty, and therefore conse-

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, VI, 271, 327

⁴⁹ Ernst, "Political Thought," 119

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 115

⁵¹ *Nar. Club Pub*, II, 41, 254, III, 225, 252, 380, IV, 409

⁵² *Ibid*, III, 280

⁵³ *Ibid*, III, 250, 343, 355-356, 366-367

quently must judge what our duty is what is this but to play with magistrates, with the souls of men, with heaven, with God, with Christ Jesus?"⁵⁴ In short, we become our own judges and saviours, setting up as authority magistrates of our own caliber in place of God

That is the first danger which Williams saw in the confusion of church and state He opposed union of church and state, not only because the state might encroach upon the church but also because the church is likely to do so upon the state He wrote that "all the power the magistrate hath over the church is temporal and not spiritual, and all the power the church hath over the magistrate is spiritual and not temporal" Moreover, since "the magistrate has no spiritual power to attain his temporal end, no more [hath] a church any temporal power to attain to her spiritual end"⁵⁵ He thus opposed not only the autocracy of absolute monarchs like James I but also the theocracy of Massachusetts The trouble in Massachusetts was that the church members and clergy controlled the government, thus making it theocratic instead of democratic It was, he held, a throwback to the obsolete government of the ancient Hebrews, one which "wakens Moses from his unknown grave, and denies Jesus yet to have seen the earth"⁵⁶ This tyranny of the church over the individual, whether through a state-controlled church or a church-controlled state, probably was more objectionable to him than was the control of the individual by the state

In the separation of church and state and the resulting freedom both to worship or not to worship, to believe or to disbelieve, which became a prime American principle, Williams' ideal is not reached even yet Churches encroach on politics, and sectarian charitable and educational institutions are supported by public taxes According to a recent report

⁵⁴ *Ibid* , III, 375

⁵⁵ *Ibid* , III, 226-227

⁵⁶ *Ibid* , III, 221

made by the Institute of Catholic Educational Research of Fordham University, aid from public school taxes is given to three hundred and forty schools conducted under Roman Catholic auspices " There are said to be some Protestant schools in the hinterlands which similarly receive support from public school taxes The Roman Church is making efforts to increase the number of its tax-supported schools, not only by open and straightforward methods but also by such a device as is now being employed in a city such as Buffalo, for example, where Catholics are agitating that public school children be given time in their school-day for sectarian religious instruction That such an arrangement is only an opening wedge was avowed in advance by Pope Pius XI when, in an official encyclical letter in 1930, he declared that "distributive justice requires" that Catholic schools be "aided from public funds" "For the mere fact that a school gives some religious instruction (often extremely stinted), does not bring it into accord with the rights of the Church and of the Christian family, or make it a fit place for Catholic students To be this, it is necessary that all the teaching and the whole organization of the school, and its teachers, syllabus and text-books in every branch, be regulated by the Christian [Catholic] spirit, under the direction and maternal supervision of the Church " 58

The United States Constitution is silent regarding education, but the spirit of that document is such that if it dealt with that subject it would outlaw grants of public tax-money to sectarian schools Indeed, the constitution of New York, the most populous and wealthy of states, declares, "Neither the State nor any subdivision thereof, shall use its property or credit or any public money, or authorize or permit either to be

⁵⁷ *New York Times*, April 25, 1937, Sect 2, p 5

⁵⁸ Pope Pius XI, "Encyclical Letter on the Christian Education of Youth," complete and official translation in *Current History*, XXXI, 1091-1104 (March, 1930)

used, directly or indirectly, in aid or maintenance, other than for examination or inspection, of any school or institution of learning wholly or in part under the control or direction of any religious denomination, or in which any denominational tenet or doctrine is taught " ⁵⁹ Catholic agitation in Buffalo and elsewhere indicates that New York liberals should prepare to face determined opposition, when a convention meets in the near future to revise the state constitution, to the traditional American institution of the free, public, non-sectarian school

In a case involving the Oregon Compulsory School Act of 1922, according to the terms of which children of school age in Oregon could attend only public schools, the United States Supreme Court decided in 1925 that this law "unreasonably interferes with the liberty of parents and guardians to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control" and is "arbitrary, unreasonable, and unlawful interference with [the] patrons and the consequent destruction of [the] business and property" of parochial and private schools ⁶⁰ This is a safeguard of the rights of parents and not an endorsement of sectarian schools, except as pieces of real estate The court merely regarded them as a vested interest, like commercial and industrial corporations, which, under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution, cannot be deprived of property by states without due process of law

Roman Catholicism is avowedly hostile, not only in practice but in theory, to the American principle of the separation of church and state In several of his formal and official encyclical letters, Pope Leo XIII condemned this principle as "false," "fatal," "an absurdity," and leading to "athe-

⁵⁹ Article IX, Sect 4

⁶⁰ *Pierce v Society of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary*, 268 U S 510-537 (1925)

⁶¹ *Leo XIII, Great Encyclical Letters* (ed John J Wynne New York Benziger, 1903), 262

⁶² *Ibid*, 159

ism" ⁶³ He wrote in one of these, in 1885, that "it is not lawful for the State, any more than for the individual, either to disregard all religious duties or to hold in equal favor different kinds of religion" ⁶⁴ He wrote in another, in 1888, that "it is quite unlawful to demand, to defend, or to grant, unconditional freedom of thought, of speech, of writing, or of worship" ⁶⁵ Almost everyone will grant that "unconditional freedom" is "unlawful," provided that it endangers public safety or decency. But the Pope did not mean merely that. When he declared that it is "not lawful" "to hold in equal favor different kinds of religion," he indicated that by outlawing "unconditional freedom of worship" he might include such Christian denominations as, for example, the Unitarian, Methodist, or Mormon churches. The un-American quality of this Roman Catholic theory vividly appears when it is compared with the provision in the Constitution of the United States, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." ⁶⁶

President Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Attorney General of the United States, in 1802, in "condemnation of the alliance between church and state," an alliance which seemed so imminent and dangerous that he refused even to "proclaim fastings and thanksgivings, as my predecessors did." ⁶⁷ Chinard wrote, in what is considered the best biography of Jefferson, that Jefferson "became more and more convinced that the intrusion of the churches into politics was one of the worst evils that could befall any country." ⁶⁸ President Grant

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 123

⁶⁴ "Immortale Dei," *ibid.*, 126

⁶⁵ "Libertas Praestantissimum," *ibid.*, 161

⁶⁶ Amendment I

⁶⁷ Jefferson, *Writings* (ed. Albert E. Bergh, Washington, D. C.; Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903-20 vols.), X, 305

⁶⁸ Chinard, Gilbert, *Thomas Jefferson the Apostle of Americanism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1929), 390

feared the encroachments of churches on the state to such a degree that he recommended in 1875 that Congress reenforce the strong constitutional provision and "Declare church and state forever separate and distinct, but each free within their [sic] proper spheres, and that all church property shall bear its own proportion of taxation " " In the light of these facts, it appears that Roman Catholics in America face the dilemma of choosing between Catholicism and Americanism When the Pope in a solemn, formal and official pronouncement clearly declares fundamental provisions of the United States Constitution "false," "fatal," "unlawful," and "an absurdity," it is difficult to understand how a strict Roman Catholic can logically be a good American

If this is the true situation, it is regrettable that, at its 1937 Commencement, Harvard University bestowed the honorary doctorate of laws on Cardinal O'Connell of Boston, who is dean of the American Roman Catholic hierarchy Had it bestowed the honorary doctorate of divinity on him it would merely have recognized his profession But it is to be expected that uninformed Roman Catholics will assume that the bestowal of the honorary doctorate of laws on their leading churchman places the stamp of approval of the greatest university in the country on the official Catholic antagonism to some of the most fundamental provisions of the American Constitution

Roger Williams perceived that he faced the dilemma which Roman Catholics still face He saw the dangers in the union of church and state and the encroachment of the church upon the state, and so he separated himself from churches " He wrote that "this mingling of the church and the world together, doth plainly discover, that such churches were never called out from the world," " "they still lodge and

⁶⁹ *Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (Ed James D Richardson, Washington, D C, 1902), VII, 356

⁷⁰ *Nar Club Pub*, II, 50-51, 171-172

⁷¹ *Ibid*, IV, 74

dwelt in the confused mixture of the unclean and the clean, of the flock of Christ, and herds of the world together " " He separated from the New England churches because they did not separate from the Anglican, " and he wished them to separate from the Anglican Church because it did not separate from the state, and he wished the Anglican to separate from the state because the state cannot separate from the world. The state is necessarily of the world, but he believed that the church should not be of the world

4

Williams' emphatic insistence on religious freedom followed logically after his emphasis on the complete separation of church and state. He considered that the state should be neither intolerant nor tolerant, but should avoid the realm of conscience entirely. For the state to be merely tolerant implies that it is granting a concession, while in reality the conscience is beyond its sphere and jurisdiction. " Further, it implies that one religion has a position superior to others. " Thomas Paine wrote a century and a half later in similar vein in "The Rights of Man" that both intolerance and tolerance are "despotisms. " "The one assumes to itself the right of withholding liberty of conscience, and the other of granting it. The one is the pope armed with fire and faggot, the other the pope selling or granting indulgences. " "

Ernst wrote that Williams embodied in his combination of political and religious principles "the two most vital contributions of the Reformation to social and civil life, the right

⁷² *Ibid*, III, 234

⁷³ *Ibid*, II, 50-51

⁷⁴ Parrington, I, 68

⁷⁵ Ernst, "Political Thought," 180 Cobb, Sanford H., *The Rise of Religious Liberty in America* (New York and London, 1902), 8

⁷⁶ Paine, *Writings* (ed Moncure D Conway New York G P Putnam, 1894 4 vols), II, 325

of individual inquiry, and the equality of all men in civil and spiritual matters " Nationalism, "the immediate political and social product of the Reformation," had speedily found acceptance, but it had been made to preclude the more profound contributions until Williams made the new and "vital concept of liberty" "one of the chief foundation stones of the new civil society " "

Whether the state controls the conscience because it controls the church, or whether the church controls conscience because it controls the state, amounted to much the same thing to him In either case, he considered it persecution; the doctrine of enforcing religious conformity seemed to him "such an error, as may well be called the bloody tenet, so directly contradicting the spirit and mind and practise of the Prince of Peace, so deeply guilty of the blood of souls compelled and forced in a spiritual and soul rape " " Such "a soul or spiritual rape is more abominable in God's eye, than to force and ravish the bodies of all the women in the world " " He considered it "a monstrous paradox, that God's children should persecute God's children and that they that hope to live eternally together with Christ Jesus in the heavens should not suffer each other to live in this common air together " "

His idea of religious freedom was that it should be absolute Perhaps never before or since has any man demanded spiritual liberty so categorically and with so much of the fervor of the prophet as did Williams when he wrote, "It is the will and command of God, that (since the coming of his son the Lord Jesus) a permission of the most paganish, Jewish, Turkish, or antichristian consciences and worships, be granted to all men in all nations and countries and they are only to be fought against with that sword which is only (in soul

⁷⁷ Ernst, "Political Thought," 48, 206

⁷⁸ *Nar Club Pub* , III, 219

⁷⁹ *Ibid* , III, 182

⁸⁰ *Ibid* , I, 319

matters) able to conquer, to wit, the sword of God's spirit, the word of God." ⁸¹

This utterance is much more liberal than that of John Milton, who wrote in his famous "Areopagitica" that there should be freedom of conscience for all except those who embrace "Popery and open superstition, which as it extirpates all religions and civil supremacies, so itself should be extirpated" ⁸² Williams did not like Roman Catholicism any better than Milton did, although he insisted on unconditional religious freedom for all. He wrote to Governor Bradstreet in 1682 that "it is the design of hell and Rome to cut the throats of all the protestors in the world" ⁸³ Writing to Governor Winthrop in 1660, he referred to Rome, as did Milton in his famous elegy, "Lycidas," as "the Romish wolf" which is "very high in resolution, and hope, and advantage to make a prey on all" ⁸⁴ A few months later he felt more optimistic, writing to Winthrop that "the bloody whore" of Rome "will shortly appear so extremely loathsome, in her drunkenness, bestialities, etc., that her bewitched paramours will tear her flesh, and burn her with fire unquenchable" ⁸⁵

This prophecy has recently been strikingly fulfilled in Mexico, Spain, and Germany. In the light of this, it is amusing that two years ago twenty-nine Episcopal clergymen in America pointed to the failure of Catholicism in these countries and in Russia, where the Russian Church was nearest of kin to the Roman, and announced pontifically that the "driving force", not of Catholicism but of Protestantism, "has exhausted itself, and it has ceased to attract and to inspire. The forces of the day have proved too strong and it is dis-

⁸¹ "The Bloody Tenet," *ibid*, III, 3-4

⁸² Milton, John, "Areopagitica," *Prose Works* (ed J A St John London: George Bell, 1895 5 vols), II, 97

⁸³ *Nar. Club Pub*, VI, 405, 311

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, VI, 308-309, 319

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, VI, 311

integrating rapidly" It is "bankrupt ethically, culturally, morally, and religiously" "

When one considers that hundreds of millions of its own communicants and their descendants have repudiated the Roman Church over a period of hundreds of years, from the earliest heresies and schisms, through the Reformation, to the recent revolutions, one wonders if these "twenty-nine fools" who yearn for some form of Catholicism desire to jump from the frying-pan into the fire Orthodox Protestantism is not rapidly gaining ground, but nowhere has it been insulted as has Catholicism in so-called Catholic countries.

No doubt the Roman Church is rapidly gaining ground in America, thanks to the immigrant horde from southern Europe and Ireland which our industrialists imported for cheap labor, and no one is more aware of this than the Catholics themselves Speaking at a large Catholic meeting in New York in 1930, Father Francis X. Talbot, literary editor of the Catholic weekly, *America*, declared that Protestantism in America is "vanishing" and the present offers to Catholics an opportunity to "make these United States Catholic"—"Catholic in legislation, Catholic in civilization and ideals." "We have come to the point where we Catholics are the greatest in numbers of all the religious bodies in the country, we are growing in wealth and power Now is the acceptable time for us to attempt to accomplish much Now is the time for our various organizations to strike hard in order to put the Catholic idea before our people." "

An instance of Roman Catholic legislation in America was the bill which passed the New York legislature last spring and which would have imposed a dictator on the theatrical world had not a Jewish governor vetoed it and saved the theatre Regarding this bill, the new and brilliant news magazine, *Life*, declared that "for the first time, the freedom

⁸⁶ *New York Times*, December 26, 1935, Sect. 1, pp. 1, 9

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, December 14, 1930, p. 21

of the New York stage was seriously threatened. Largely at the instigation of the Catholic Church, a bill was hastily passed by the Legislature, empowering New York City's Commissioner of Licenses to close any play he deemed 'immoral'. Since most U S drama flows from the fountainhead of the New York stage, this measure would have made a political job-holder the supreme censor of the American theatre" † Regarding this Catholic effort, the eminent publicist, Walter Lippmann, wrote, "Here we can see how when men forget the principles of their government, they set up arbitrary authority in place of lawful procedure"* In other words, this instance of Roman Catholic legislation is an instance of the fascistic tendency in America. It is also "Puritanism" at its worst.

If the history of the Roman Church proves anything, the sooner it gains control of the United States, as formerly it did in Mexico and Spain, the sooner (as Williams prophesied) "her bewitched paramours" will rise against her here as elsewhere. The Roman Church, its history shows, is its own worst enemy. It cannot stand long-continued prosperity. George Santayana, the eminent philosopher who was once, but (like Dr Will Durant) no longer, a devout Catholic, referred to this point in his recent novel "The Last Puritan". Dr Peter Alden remarks to his cousin, a convert to Catholicism, that Catholics are "always pure-minded and heroic while in opposition, but if you had your way, you would soon grow fat and worldly in authority not to speak of the intellectual illusions, as they seem to me, which you would make inveterate" " "

Unlike Roman Catholicism, and despite his distrust and dislike of it, Williams consistently demanded unconditional

† *Life*, II, No 22, pp 17, 19 (May 31, 1937)

* *Ibid*

88 *The Last Puritan* (New York: Scribner, 1936), 189

religious freedom for all In a preliminary note addressed to the famous "Long Parliament," introductory to "The Bloody Tenet," he urged Parliament not to change the religion of England, even if to purify it, "for that is but to turn the wheel, which another Parliament, and the very next, may turn again", rather, he urged that it "ease the subjects and yourselves from a yoke" of intolerance by establishing religious freedom⁸⁹ In a similar preliminary address to the later "Bloody Tenet Yet More Bloody," he turned his most felicitous phrase in complimenting the Parliament on its concern for religious liberty "light from the father of lights hath shined on your eyes mercy from the father of mercies hath softened your breasts, to be tender of the tenderest part of man, his conscience"⁹⁰

But the battle was not won in England, or in New England Throughout his lifetime, as in ours, there was the necessity for struggle for freedom—if not to get it, then to keep it Williams wrote, "liberty of searching out truth [is] hardly got, and as hardly kept"⁹¹ In his writings, he argued for religious liberty from every angle

He argued for it on the ground of civil harmony and stability, writing that religious persecution has been "the greatest occasion of civil war",⁹² "the lancet that hath pierced the veins of kings and kingdoms, of saints and sinners, and filled the streams and rivers with their blood"⁹³ Moreover, he wrote that even "a false religion and worship will not hurt the civil state, in case the worshippers break no civil law"⁹⁴ Similarly, Thomas Jefferson declared, a century and a half later, that "it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there

⁸⁹ *Nar Club Pub*, III, 7

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, IV, 13

⁹¹ *Ibid*, IV, 30

⁹² *Ibid*, III, 4

⁹³ *Ibid*, III, 182

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, III, 198

are twenty Gods, or no God It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg " ⁹⁵

He argued for it on the ground of its consistency with the Reformation, writing, "In vain have English Parliaments permitted English Bibles in the poorest English homes, and the simplest man or woman to search the Scriptures, if yet against their souls' persuasion from the Scripture, they should be forced (as if they lived in Spain or Rome itself without the sight of a Bible) to believe as the church believes " ⁹⁶

He argued for it on the ground of humaneness, writing that persecution is "opposite to the very tender bowels of humanity, (how much more of Christianity?) abhorring to pour out the blood of men merely for their soul's belief and worship " ⁹⁷

He argued for it on the ground that persecution is in the long run ineffective, writing, "An arm of flesh and sword of steel cannot reach to cut the darkness of the mind, the hardness and unbelief of the heart, and kindly operate upon the soul's affections to forsake a long continued Father's worship, and to embrace a new, though the best and truest " ⁹⁸

He argued for it on the ground that, if not effective, persecution is, even worse, a deterrent to conversion; "violence and a sword of steel begets such an impression in the sufferers, that certainly they conclude religion cannot be true which needs such instruments of violence to uphold it", "how hard it is for any man to do good, to speak effectually to the soul or conscience of any whose body he afflicts and persecutes, and that only for their soul and conscience sake " ⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Jefferson, *Writings*, II, 221

⁹⁶ *Nar Club Pub*, III, 13

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, II, 35

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, III, 354

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, III, 139

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, I, 328

He argued for it on the ground that, even if it seemed to cause conversions, it might only be forcing the persecuted into the "guilt of hypocrisy" in making them "act and practise in matters of religion and worship against the doubts and checks of their consciences, causing their bodies to worship, when their souls are far off" ¹⁰¹ "Sooner shall one suit of apparel fit every body, one law every case, or one size or last every foot" than one church every soul ¹⁰² For, "whatever worship, ministry, ministration, the best and purest are practiced without faith and true persuasion . . . , they are sin, sinful worships" ¹⁰³ Such forced and hypocritical worship renders "the garden and spouse of Christ a filthy dunghill and whore-house of rotten and stinking whores and hypocrites" ¹⁰⁴

He argued for it on the ground that no one, whether persecutor or persecuted, is likely always to be wholly right or wholly wrong He wrote to Governor Endicott of Massachusetts Bay, in 1651, that "'tis impossible for any man or men to maintain their Christ by their sword, and to worship a true Christ' to fight against all consciences opposite to theirs, and not to fight against God in some of them" ¹⁰⁵

And he argued for it on the ground that persecution is "opposite to that light of Scripture which is yet to shine, ¹⁰⁶ which must by that doctrine be suppressed as new or old heresy or novelty" ¹⁰⁷ He wrote that John Cotton, "expecting more light, must (according to his way of persecution) persecute Christ Jesus, if he bring it" ¹⁰⁸

This last argument was especially dear to his heart, for he was a "Seeker" Cotton Mather gave a good definition of

¹⁰¹ *Ibid* , III, 258-259

¹⁰² *Ibid* , II, 25-26

¹⁰³ *Ibid* , III, 12

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid* , IV, 122

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid* , VI, 225

¹⁰⁶ John Robinson's "more truth and light" See *ante*, 11

¹⁰⁷ *Nar Club Pub* , II, 35

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid* , II, 29

Seekers when he wrote in connection with Williams that they were those "keeping to that one principle, that everyone should have the liberty to worship God according to the light of his own conscience, but owning of no true churches or ordinances now in the world" ¹⁰⁹ After separating from the Salem church he never actively maintained membership in any church except for three or four months when he was temporarily a member of the Baptist Church in Providence ¹¹⁰ He wrote that he was not satisfied either with the Baptist form of baptism or "the authority by which it is done" ¹¹¹

He graphically described his attitude as a Seeker when he wrote that "it is a glorious character of every true disciple or scholar of Jesus Christ, to be never too old to learn It is the command of Christ Jesus to his scholars to try all things", ¹¹² "the Father of Spirits mercifully persuaded me to swallow down no longer without chewing to chew no longer without tasting, to taste no longer without begging the Holy Spirit of God to enlighten and enliven me against the fear of men, tradition of fathers, or the favor or custom of any men or times" ¹¹³

5

Williams' insistence on religious freedom appears thus far to have been merely theoretical But he practised as he preached "I desire not that liberty for myself, which I would not freely and impartially weigh out to all the world besides" ¹¹⁴ He believed, as Elbert Hubbard expressed it, that

¹⁰⁹ Mather, Cotton, *Magnalia*, II, 432

¹¹⁰ *Nar Club Pub*, II, 73-74n

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, VI, 188

¹¹² *Ibid*, IV, 29

¹¹³ Letter to Mrs Sadleir, 1652 *Ibid*, VI, 245-246

¹¹⁴ Williams, *The Hureling Ministry None of Christ's* (London, 1652), 176

"you keep freedom by giving it away" ¹¹⁵ In Rhode Island, unlike Maryland and other tolerant spots, freedom of conscience was never confined to Protestants or even to Christians, Williams advocated the "full and peaceful habitation [of Jews] amongst us" ¹¹⁶ The first Jewish synagogue in America was established at Newport ¹¹⁷ Williams even declared that religious error must not only be permitted, but protected, by the state ¹¹⁸

He admitted the Quakers, although he considered them in error, but he waged a three-day debate with them with the bitterness of Clarence Darrow and some of his opponents at the present time ¹¹⁹ His hostility in this encounter is perhaps the only blot on his character as a gentleman He combatted their opinions so vigorously that his contemporary Massachusetts historian, William Hubbard, wrote that his argument "showed that his root had not gone up as rottenness, nor his blossom as dust" ¹²⁰

But the Quakers exhibited no more "sweet reasonableness" than did Williams They upbraided him for his age, addressing him contemptuously as "old man, old man," and interrupted his lengthy and learned arguments ¹²¹ He wrote of them later, "I never met with such a judging censuring

¹¹⁵ Hubbard, "Theodore Parker," *Little Journeys to the Homes of Great Reformers* (East Aurora, New York: The Roycrofters, 1907, 2 vols.), II, 64

¹¹⁶ Williams, *A Testimony to the Fourth Paper presented by Major Butler* (ed. Clarence S. Brigham, Providence, R. I., 1903), 18

¹¹⁷ Bicknell, Thomas W., *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (New York: American Historical Association, 1920, 5 vols.), II, 631

¹¹⁸ Ernst, *Roger Williams*, 245

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 461-479 Williams, "George Fox Dugged Out of his Burrows," *Nar. Club Pub.*, V, 1-503

¹²⁰ Hubbard, *A General History of New England from the Discovery to 1680* (Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, Series II, vols. V-VI Boston: Little and Brown, 1815), 209

¹²¹ *Nar. Club Pub.*, V, 47

reviling spirit as is the spirit of the Quakers " ¹²² He considered them as dogmatic and spiritually arrogant as the Pope, both considering themselves infallible and inspired, "the pope and they only must interpret Scriptures, they only give the sense, they only judge all controversies, yea they dispense with the Scriptures," ¹²³ preaching "not Christ Jesus but themselves, yea they preached the Lord Jesus to be themselves " ¹²⁴

Williams suffered the Quakers and other fanatics, though not gladly. It seems no exaggeration to say that, before Voltaire was born, Williams not only had risked his life but founded a state on Voltaire's famous dictum, "I wholly disagree with what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it"—and to think and to believe it. He was anxious that the road to freedom be kept open in the future, and when the people of Providence decided in 1662 to divide among themselves the remainder of the land held in common, he urged that "after you have got over the black brook of some soul bondage yourselves, you tear not down the bridge after you, by leaving no small pittance for distressed souls that may come after you " ¹²⁵

6

When Williams was banished from Massachusetts, John Cotton rationalized that since "a man may make his choice of a variety of more pleasant, and profitable seats, than he leaveth behind " banishment in this country, is not counted so much a confinement, as an enlargement " ¹²⁶

Williams needed an enlarged sphere of action. He was already too large for Massachusetts. As a speculative Seeker,

¹²² *Ibid*, V, 20

¹²³ *Ibid*, V, 49-50

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, V, 72

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, VI, 318

¹²⁶ Cotton, "Reply to Mr Williams," *Nar Club Pub*, II, 19

he pointed toward the eighteenth century romanticists and rationalists, and Channing and the Unitarians, as a kind of transcendentalist, he was a forerunner of Emerson and the Concord group, as a political theorist, he partially anticipated John Locke, the natural rights philosophers, the French romantic school, and Paine and Jefferson ¹²⁷

Despite repeated efforts, it was not until more than three hundred years had passed, as a gesture of good will for the tercentenary of Rhode Island in 1936, that Massachusetts repealed the decree of Williams' banishment ¹²⁸ But the same legislature which repealed it passed the notorious "red-baiting" teachers' oath bill ¹²⁹ According to Dr Samuel Eliot Morison, professor of history and Tercentenary Historian at Harvard, this bill "repudiated" academic freedom at the behest of those who "wish to treat teachers as an intellectual army in the service of the State or of a party" ¹³⁰

Would that, in a time of teachers' oath bills and aggression by the church upon the state, his doughty spirit might now return to the scene of its banishment! Roger Williams is dead, long live Roger Williams!

¹²⁷ Ernst, "Political Thought," 205 Parrington, I, 62-66

¹²⁸ *Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Court of Massachusetts*, 1936 (Boston Wright and Potter, 1936), Resolves, Chapter 11, p 610

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 1935, Acts, Chapter 370, p 412

¹³⁰ Morison, Samuel E, *Three Centuries of Harvard* (Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1936), 256

III

ANNE HUTCHINSON EARLY EMERSONIAN

1

AMONG the marble monuments in the First Church in Boston, which, although it unorthodoxly turned Unitarian more than a century ago, might be called the Westminster Abbey of New England, is one to a seventeenth century heretic who was banished, only to remain one of that congregation's chief claims to fame The memorial is inscribed

This Tablet is placed here
in Honor of
ANNE HUTCHINSON
Born in Lincolnshire England about 1592
Received into the Membership
of this Church 1634
Banished from Massachusetts
by Decree of Court 1637
Killed by the Indians at Pelham, N Y 1643
A "Breeder of Heresies "
"Of ready Wit and Bold Spirit "
She was a persuasive Advocate of the
Right of independent Judgment

Mistress Hutchinson's maternal grandfather was a friend of the great Dutch humanist, Erasmus The elder brothers of both her mother and father were baronets, Sir Erasmus Dryden and Sir Edward Marbury Her father, Francis Marbury, was rector of prominent Anglican parishes in London Her

second cousin was the noted poet, John Dryden. Her husband was a grandson of a mayor of Lincoln. Her great-great-grandson was to be the last royal governor of Massachusetts and a noted historian of New England. So Anne Hutchinson was a distinguished member of distinguished families.¹

She was a good woman as well as a distinguished one. When Rev. John Cotton admonished one of her followers for heresy, he said, "I doubt not that some of you have also received much good from our sister [Mrs. Hutchinson] helps in your spiritual estates, and have been brought from resting upon any duties or works or righteousness of your own, but let not the good you have received from her, make you to receive all for good that comes from her, for you see she is but a woman and many unsound and dangerous principles are held by her."² He said to the Court that "she may hold errors [of opinion] as dangerous and of worse consequence than matters of practise."³ In admonishing Mrs. Hutchinson before the Boston congregation, he said, "you have been an instrument of doing some good amongst us, you have been helpful to many [but] the evil of your opinions do outway all the good of your doings."⁴

She was brilliant and capable, as well as good. Edward Johnson, a historian who was her contemporary, called her, perhaps sarcastically, a "masterpiece of women's wit."⁵ Winthrop called her "a woman of a haughty and fierce carriage, of a nimble wit and active spirit, and a very voluble tongue, more bold than a man, though," he surprisingly adds, "in un-

¹ Rugg, Winifred King, *Unafraid: A Life of Anne Hutchinson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 1-15.

² Keayne, Robert, "A Report of the Trial of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson before the Church in Boston, March, 1638," *Antinomianism in Massachusetts* (ed. Charles Francis Adams: Prince Society Publications, XXI Boston, 1894), 312.

³ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 313-314.

⁵ *Wonder-Working Providence, 1628-1651* (ed. J. Franklin Jameson: New York: Scribner, 1910), 132.

derstanding and judgment, inferior to many women" * Most authorities consider her exceptionally keen. Certainly she bore herself brilliantly in her court trial and ecclesiastical examinations.

"Her life was a melodrama," wrote Winifred K. Rugg, one of her recent biographers. "She left her comfortable home in England for conscience's sake, she persuaded her family to come to America, she became the leader of a powerful party in the colony, she collided with the clergy, she was tried before the General Court of Massachusetts, she was expelled from the colony and excommunicated from the church, she helped to form a freer settlement in a new wilderness, in later years she sought still another refuge, and finally she perished, with almost all her family, at the hands of the Indians. Here is a tale of adventure."

Upon her arrival in Boston in 1634, she was accepted as the social leader of the town and her husband built a large house on one of the best corners. Friend of John Cotton and the brilliant young Governor, Sir Henry Vane, she became the intellectual leader of women as well as the social leader of the community. It was as a feminist and founder of the first woman's club that she developed her key doctrines of the "inner light" and the right of individual judgment, which led to her prosecution.

Beginning her meetings for women by rehearsing the sermon of the previous Sunday, she had not held many sessions before questions led her to give her own expositions. Later, she advanced her own opinions, and finally she even criticized the ministers.⁶ They arraigned her for her heresy, presumption, and sedition, and her trial at Cambridge in 1637,

⁶ Winthrop, John, "A Short Story," *Antinomianism in Massachusetts*, 157-158.

⁷ Rugg, viii-ix.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 202, 92.

⁹ Winthrop, "A Short Story," 168-170.

at the same session of the General Court which located Harvard there, was as arbitrary, extra-legal, and high-handed as a twentieth century labor trial " Unfortunately, she did not have Clarence Darrow to defend her But injustice is done to her contemporaries if they are visualized as shooing her from the colony in the dead of winter into the midst of Indians lurking in the thicket to take her scalp She remained in Roxbury until spring, and it was six years later, and after she had moved twice, that she was murdered by the Indians Massachusetts could wash its hands of that and consider it the judgment of God upon her

2

Her contemporaries among the New England clergy, including finally even her teacher and friend, John Cotton, considered her so dangerous as to be silenced at any price for the general good But it is difficult now for us to understand what all the fuss was about

Governor Winthrop admitted that the theological difference between the clergy and the "Antinomians" was subtle and obscure The "Antinomians," as Mrs Hutchinson and her supporters were called, were not Antinomians at all " That was the name given by Martin Luther to followers at Munster of John Agricola, who, insisting upon justification by faith alone, were violent and licentious and considered themselves above the moral law as set forth in the Mosaic code of the decalogue " When the clergy labelled Mrs Hutchinson and her party "Antinomians," and when Johnson wrote that their

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 170, 217, 221 Keayne, "A Report," 306 "The Examination of Mrs Anne Hutchinson at the Court of Newtowne," anonymous, in Hutchinson, Thomas, *History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay* (ed Laurence S Mayo Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1936 3 vols), II, 366-390

¹¹ Adams, Charles Francis, *Three Episodes of Massachusetts History* (Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1893 2 vols), 432-435

¹² *Catholic Encyclopedia*, article "Antinomianism "

"new light proved but old darkness, such as sometime overshadowed the city of Munster," "they were merely doing what present-day Tories do when they call some of our reformers "Communists"

The involved theological terms in which they dealt "did not admit of definition," wrote Charles Francis Adams II in his excellent history of this controversy, and so these terms "were devoid of exact meaning" The orthodox and the "Antinomians" were "simply engaged in hot wrangling over the unknowable" "An instance of this was Mrs Hutchinson's distinction between the human soul and spirit, when she insisted that the soul is mortal while the spirit is immortal" "It is doubtful that anyone knew, or knows, what she meant by that, but nevertheless, during her trial for heresy before the Boston church, its minister, Rev John Wilson, called her doctrine "atheism" "Rev John Davenport considered it conducive to "libertinism" and asserted that her opinions "shake the very foundation of our faith and tend to the overthrow of all religion" "One Lieutenant Gibbens looked upon "our sister as a lost woman" "

John Cotton considered this doctrine so dangerous, as he understood or misunderstood it, that he declared its logical consequence was that "all is in vain" For it leads us to moral abandon, until we cry, "come let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die, then let us neither fear hell nor the loss of heaven, then let us believe there is neither angels nor spirits What need we care what we speak, or do hear, if our souls perish and die like beasts" "The same words are used now by the orthodox to describe what they consider the necessary

¹³ Johnson, 132

¹⁴ Adams, *Three Episodes*, 493-494

¹⁵ Keayne, "A Report," 291

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 295

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 304

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 307

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 315

attitude of those who, unlike Mrs Hutchinson, consider both the soul and the "spirit" merely mortal

Although Winthrop wrote that "about eighty" so-called "Antinomian" "opinions, some blasphemous, others erroneous, and all unsafe", were "condemned,"²⁰ Mrs Hutchinson's principal theological point of difference with the clergy was that she insisted upon a covenant of grace while she asserted that most of the clergy, except Cotton and Wheelwright, taught a covenant of works as essential for salvation. These terms are obscure enough even in their present use, although by covenant of grace, is meant the salvation of the "elect" through God's mercy, and by a covenant of works, is meant possible salvation for each individual through his own good deeds. But in that day, according to Adams, grace "implied a certain vague and mystic exaltation and serenity of soul arising from the consciousness of a Heaven-directed heart", and works "meant simply an exact compliance with all external [religious] observances."²¹

Thus, in attacking the covenant of works, it would appear that she was a protestor against formalism, merely going further in her protest against it than did the Puritans. Had "works" signified then what it now does, her objection to it as the prime means of salvation would mark her as a conservative, for the modern tendency is away from faith and in the direction of works as the main essential in religion.

It would seem, however, as though "works" must have had a little of its modern meaning even in her time, for Winthrop and Hubbard each wrote that "most of her new tenets" "tended to slothfulness, and [to] quench all endeavor in the creature."²² Winthrop cannot be accused of being a Com-

²⁰ Winthrop, *Journal* (ed James K Hosmer New York Scribner, 1908 2 vols), I, 232

²¹ Adams, *Three Episodes*, 402-404

²² Winthrop, "A Short Story," 161, 163 Hubbard, William, *A General History of New England* (*Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, Series II*, vols V-VI), 283

munist, even by the Daughters of the American Revolution, but his criticism of Mrs Hutchinson's doctrine means that he considered that her religion was "an opiate of the people." Not only Communists, but modern religious Humanists, object to religion which "quenches endeavor." If "works" had much of its modern meaning then, her objection to it puts her out of sympathy with progressive modern religion.

3

It is maintained by many writers that Mrs Hutchinson was not finally condemned and banished for heresy but for contumely and anarchy. She was summoned for trial before the Great and General Court of Massachusetts in November 1637 "partly [for] casting reproach upon the faithful ministers of the country, and upon their ministry." Johnson quoted her as saying that the clergy, in their insistence upon the covenant of works, were merely "a company of legal professors [who] lie poring on the law which Christ hath abolished." ²³ The Rev Hugh Peters declared during her trial that "the main thing against her" was "that she charged us to be unable ministers of the gospel and to preach a covenant of works." ²⁴

Rev M^r Wilson told her that when she claimed to criticize the clergy lest they set themselves up in place of God, she really did so in order "to set up yourself in the room of God above others, that you might be extolled and admired, and followed after, that you might be a great prophetess."

²⁵ Wrote Adams, the Massachusetts product of the Reformation had "resulted in practically substituting many little popes and little bishops for the one pope and the

²³ Winthrop, "A Short Story," 164

²⁴ Johnson, 134

²⁵ "The Examination," in Hutchinson, II, 379

²⁶ Keayne, "A Report," 326

few great bishops " " This was a tendency towards anarchy, and when Mrs Hutchinson criticized the clergy and set up her own judgment she merely completed the process. Perhaps, however, the clergy were not so dismayed that she carried Protestantism to its logical and anarchic conclusion as they were afraid that she would lessen their influence and authority. Adams went so far as to write that underlying the whole controversy "there lay the hard substratum of injured pride and personal hate " ²⁷

In going contrary to the established authority of the clergy, she was considered officially a disturber of the peace and an anarchist, unofficially, a detractor and rival. Rev Mr Peters said to her, "you have rather been a husband than a wife, and a preacher than a hearer, and a magistrate than a subject, and so you have thought to carry all things in church and commonwealth as you would . " " At her trial, Governor Winthrop considered her opinions to be "the most desperate enthusiasm in the world, for nothing but a word comes to her mind and then an application is made which is nothing to the purpose . . . Of all the revelations that ever I read of I never read the like . . . The Enthusiasts and Anabaptists had never the like " ²⁸

The Deputy Governor, Thomas Dudley, continued in the same strain with reference to the violent and disgusting excesses of German fanatics who "have stirred up their hearers to take up arms against their prince and to cut the throats of one another, . . . and whether the devil may inspire the same here I know not, for I am fully persuaded that Mrs Hutchinson is deluded by the devil . " ²⁹ It was declared that she "walked by such a rule as cannot stand with the peace of any state, for such bottomless revelations . . . if

²⁷ Adams, *Three Episodes*, 382

²⁸ *Ibid* , 493-494

²⁹ Keayne, "A Report," 329

³⁰ "The Examination," in Hutchinson, II, 387-388

they be allowed in one thing, must be admitted a rule in all things, for they being above reason and Scripture, they are not subject to control " " Winthrop declared that her "immediate revelations" hath been the ground of all these tumults and troubles, and I would that those were all cut off from us that trouble us, for this is the thing that hath been the root of all the mischief " "

Her contemporary, Rev Thomas Weld, wrote that the "Antinomians" not only disturbed "the churches, but miserably interrupt the civil peace, and they threw contempt both upon courts, and churches, and began now to raise sedition amongst us, to the endangering the commonwealth", "for these grounds," "and not for their opinions, as themselves falsely reported," they were arraigned before the General Court "Some were disfranchised, others fined, the incurable amongst them banished " " Governor Winthrop declared to her during her trial, "your conscience you may keep to yourself, but if in this cause you shall countenance and encourage those that thus transgress the law, you must be called in question for it, and that is not for your conscience, but for your practice " "

Despite this expressed fear of political as well as religious disturbance and anarchy, Adams wrote that the fear was perhaps insincere and certainly unfounded. The prosecution of Williams and the "Antinomians" and the enactment of the Alien Law of 1637³¹ aroused unfavorable criticism in England³². It may have been mere policy to base this prosecution on political rather than religious grounds. In any case, Adams

³¹ Winthrop, "A Short Story," 177

³² "The Examination," in Hutchinson, II, 387

³³ Winthrop, "A Short Story," 87

³⁴ *Ibid*, 165

³⁵ *Massachusetts Colonial Laws* (ed William H Whitmore Boston, 1887), 143-144

³⁶ Winthrop, "A Short Story," 87 Edwards, Thomas, *Antapologia* (London, 1644), 166

wrote that the "Antinomians" were no menace to the existence of the colony " Recently, however, Dr Perry Miller of Harvard wrote, "The Massachusetts experiment would have been shattered had the centrifugal forces of Protestantism broken loose " ³⁷

Adams considered the fundamental significance of the controversy to lie in the issue of religious toleration To tolerate or not to tolerate, that was the question which so early became a burning one in Massachusetts In harrying Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson out of its jurisdiction, Massachusetts decided against toleration, and its decision was final "so far as colonial and provincial Massachusetts was concerned " ³⁸

4

The significance of Anne Hutchinson for modern religious liberalism lies in the facts that she was, first, not a formalist, and second, not even a conformist Neither were the other Puritans—in England, but she was consistent enough not to be so even in New England She was a dissenter against dissenters Not only was she a nonconformist, but she based her nonconformity on her own private judgment, daring to be self-reliant in Emerson's full sense of the term ³⁹

Unfortunately, however, she went far beyond Emerson's dictum, "Books are for the scholar's idle moments," ⁴⁰ in deprecating education and learning She was accused of "casting dung on the [learned] ministers' faces," ⁴¹ and some of her fol-

³⁷ Adams, *Three Episodes*, 571

³⁸ Miller, Perry, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630-1650* (Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1933), 162

³⁹ Adams, "Introduction," *Antinomianism in Massachusetts*, 14

⁴⁰ See *post*, 185-187

⁴¹ Emerson, Ralph Waldo, *Works* (Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1883 12 vols), I, 92

⁴² Quoted in Morison, Samuel Eliot, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1935), 174

lowers made a wretched pun at the expense of education when they termed universities "ninneversities" ⁴³ Morison wrote recently that "if learned ministers could be silenced by the 'immediate revelations' of an untrained woman, what was the use of a college to train ministers?" "The suppression of Hutchinsonianism was the price that New England had to pay for a college" ⁴⁴ If this is an over-statement, it is still true that her "inner voice" was hostile to that education and learning which are one of the traditional glories of New England

During her trial, seeing herself being persecuted rather than prosecuted, on grounds of conscience rather than of sedition, she exclaimed, "Now if you do condemn me for speaking what in my conscience I know to be truth I must commit myself unto the Lord" She was asked how she knew that God rather than the devil inspired her, to which she replied, "How did Abraham know that it was God that bid him offer his son, being a breach of the sixth commandment?"

Dudley answered that Abraham knew "by an immediate voice."

Mrs Hutchinson "So to me by an immediate revelation "

Dudley "How ' an immediate revelation "

Mrs Hutchinson "By the voice of his own spirit to my soul " ⁴⁵

Thus was she a direct heir of John Robinson and his vision of the evolution of spiritual truth It might be said that she amended his statement to read, "The Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth" ⁴⁶ "by the voice of his own spirit to my soul " Thus is the letter of the Word destroyed, but its spirit renewed with every believer

⁴³ Johnson, Edward, *Wonder-Working Providence*, 127

⁴⁴ Morison, 175-176, 179

⁴⁵ "The Examination" in *Hutchinson II*, 383-384

⁴⁶ See *ante*, 11

IV
COTTON MATHER PREACHER AND DOER
OF THE WORD

1

PERHAPS no man except Thomas Paine, among American religionists, has been so maligned as was the Reverend Cotton Mather. He was not popular with his contemporaries, and their descendants have not grown to love him. But Paine was hated for his radicalism, while Mather was usually hated for his conservatism. In neither case was the hatred justified.

It is true that many of the older historians paid their respects to all the Mathers in a civil manner, but the "filio-pietistic school" of historians was routed unceremoniously in 1893 by Charles Francis Adams II, in his essays on "Massachusetts: Its Historians and Its History".¹ One of the most recent authoritative writers, the admirable Vernon Louis Parrington, termed our hero "the provincial Cotton".² Even more recently, Samuel Eliot Morison of Harvard, who takes a more kindly view of Puritanism than do some other reputable historians, wrote that Cotton Mather expected to succeed Leverett as President of Harvard College in 1724. "With only four years to live, he could not have done the College much harm, and what fun his presidency would have been to write about!"³

¹ Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1894, pp. 44-50.

² *The Colonial Mind, 1620-1800 (Main Currents in American Thought)*, I. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), 99.

³ *Three Centuries of Harvard*, (Harvard University Press, 1936), 76.

There are signs, however, that, in the course of the rhythmic rise and fall of reputations, the star of Cotton Mather is in the ascendant. It is the purpose of this essay, with discrimination, to give it a further push upward to its proper zenith.

In addition to being the grandson of the Rev. John Cotton, for whom he was named, Cotton Mather was also the grandson of the Rev. Richard Mather who was born in England in 1596. He came to America in 1636, immediately became minister of the Dorchester church, and held that pastorate until his death in 1669. He had been an Anglican clergyman of note in England, but upon his refusal to wear a surplice he was forced out of the clergy and informed by a churchman that his sin would have been less had he "begotten seven bastards" ⁴.

His son, grandson, and great-grandson continued the family preaching tradition as well as the strenuous life which characterized him. The dying speech of this first Mather, at the close of an active life of preaching, writing, and politicizing, was typical not only of himself but of his dynasty: "I have not been in my study [for several days], and is it not a lamentable thing that I should lose so much time?" ⁵

His son, Increase, born in Dorchester, in 1639, educated at Harvard and Dublin Universities, president of Harvard from 1685 to 1701, and a political power for many years, is best remembered as an opponent of violent measures against persons accused of witchcraft and as a supporter of his son Cotton in the cause of inoculation against small-pox.

His son, Cotton, born in Boston in 1663, succeeded his father as minister of the Second Church in Boston in 1678, a position which he held for fifty years until his death in 1728. He yearned to be president of Harvard, but, although he was

⁴ Quoted by Tyler, Moses C., *History of American Literature During the Colonial Time* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1897, 2 vols.), II, 65.

⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, II, 67.

a distinguished man, he was passed over on three occasions. Yet he had more than three hundred and fifty publications to his credit, held an honorary doctorate in divinity from the University of Glasgow, and was a fellow of the Royal Society of London.

2

In spite of his superstitiousness and his displays of vanity and cantankerousness, Cotton Mather was an admirable man in several important respects.

As a parent, according to his most recent biographers, Ralph and Louise Boas, "He was far ahead of his times in the matters both of education and of discipline. He objected to the prevailing mode of beating knowledge into the young, his children were brought up to regard instruction as a favor, the denial of it a punishment. At table Mather would entertain his children with lively stories, not necessarily from the Bible. Perhaps he originated this scheme of sugar-coated instruction which seems to us entirely modern. He made it a point to get home by nine o'clock at night in order to give his children an hour before their bedtime," originating Longfellow's plan of "The Children's Hour." "He saw to it that his daughters as well as his sons were really educated. One daughter he selected to learn medicine, as a useful and instructing field of knowledge for a woman." "All his children were to learn shorthand." "That [his daughter] Nancy could have waited until she was thirty before joining the church speaks well for her father. None of his children were forced in this or any other matter. . . No child of his was forced into marriage, or an uncongenial occupation, or religion. In a day when parental authority had every sanction of society and church, this bespeaks a sweet temper and a wide tolerance. The two of the fifteen children who survived him had memories other than their contemporaries, for their father's views of disci-

pline, education, and parenthood were such as to place him among the most enlightened of present-day educators " "

3

As a theoretical religious rationalist, he partially anticipated William Ellery Channing when he wrote that "the light of reason, is the work of God, the law of reason is the law of God, the voice of reason is the voice of God, we never have to do with reason, but at the same time we have to do with God, our submission to the rules of reason is an obedience to God

Let me as often as I have Reason set before me, think upon it, the great God now speaks unto me " " Although in practice he usually subordinated reason to faith, the value and importance of reason were never more vividly eulogized, and in theory, if not in practice, he was a pioneer American religious rationalist

As a scientist, he was ahead of most of his contemporaries in both England and America His reputation will never surmount the Salem witchcraft persecutions in 1692, but his part in that tragedy is less damning than is usually supposed He held a somewhat scientific attitude towards witchcraft, even though he superstitiously believed that "a real and proper enchantment, of the divels, does blind, and move the minds of the most of men " " He sensibly proposed, "at the beginning," that "the possessed people might be scattered far asunder," a course of action which might have broken up the "manifestations," and he offered to "provide for six of them, and we would see whether without more bitter methods, prayer with fasting would not put an end unto these heavy trials. " "

⁷ Cotton Mather *Keeper of the Puritan Conscience* (New York: Harper, 1928), 241, 252-253

⁸ Mather, Cotton, *Diary* (ed Worthington C Ford *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, Seventh Series, VII-VIII Boston, 1911-1912), Part II, 144

⁹ *Ibid*, Part I, 158

But his offer was not accepted " Several years earlier, in 1688, he had taken into his own home the eldest Goodwin girl, supposedly "possessed," in order to keep her under observation, much as psychiatrists might now do " Had he understood child psychology more fully, or even recollected his own childhood, he might have grasped the situation more correctly.

He wrote in his "Diary" that he regretted the "raging, railing, scandalous and unreasonable disposition" of the people. "For my own part, I was always afraid of proceeding to convict and condemn any person, as a confederate with conflicting demons, upon so feeble an evidence, as a spectral representation Accordingly, I ever testified against it, both publicly and privately, and in my letters to the judges, I particularly, besought them, that they would by no means admit it " "

He claimed that he was consistent in his wish for moderation He preached a sermon for which he "ran the hazard of much reproach by testifying in [it], against the persecution of erroneous and conscientious dissenters, by the civil magistrate I feared that the zeal of my country had formerly had in it more fire than should have been; especially, when the mad Quakers were sent unto the gallows, that should have been kept rather in a bedlam I think, I am the only minister living in the land, that have testified against the suppression of heresy, by persecution [execution?]" " Mather edited his "Diary" in the form in which it has come down to us, and according to its modern editor, it is "only what he wished to have preserved for the benefit of his children" " But this does not preclude its containing at least a grain of truth.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, Part I, 151-152

¹¹ Mather, Cotton, "Memorable Providences," *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648-1706* (ed George L Burr New York Scribner, 1914), 110-124

¹² *Diary*, Part I, 150-151

¹³ *Ibid*, Part I, 149

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Part I, xiv

As early as 1714 he accepted the Copernican astronomy and endorsed it in a sermon, to the annoyance of Judge Samuel Sewall, who considered it "inconvenient to assert such problems" ¹⁵

In 1721, a fierce conflict between science and religion arose over Mather's attempt during an epidemic to introduce inoculation against small-pox. It is ironical that, in what was perhaps the first direct conflict in America between religion and science, a clergyman was the champion of science against the leading physician, who opposed inoculation. Mather's liberalism in this matter was greater than that of many English clergymen, one of whom preached against inoculation as some of the clergy now preach against birth control, as "a diabolical operation, which usurps an authority founded neither in the laws of nature or religion, which tends to anticipate and banish Providence out of the world and promotes the increase of vice and immorality" ¹⁶

Mather persisted in his efforts for inoculation with the zeal of conviction, and for his pains he was reviled and bombed. The bomb failed to go off, but a note attached to it showed that it was prepared in earnest. "Cotton Mather, you dog, damn you. I'll inoculate you with this, with a pox to you" ¹⁷. To this he made the magnificent reply in his "Diary": "I had much rather die by such hands, as now threaten my life, than by a fever, and much rather die for my conformity to the blessed Jesus in essays to save the lives of men from the destroyer, than for some truths, tho' precious ones, to which many martyrs testified formerly in the flames of Smithfield" ¹⁸

¹⁵ Sewall, Samuel, *Diary* (Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, Fifth Series, V-VII), VII, 31

¹⁶ Adams, James Truslow, *Provincial Society, 1690-1763* (A History of American Life, III, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger and Dixon Ryan Fox. New York: Macmillan, 1927), 269-270

¹⁷ *Diary*, Part II, 658

¹⁸ *Ibid*, Part II, 660

4

In that reply, Mather strongly glorified works above faith. He held to justification by faith rather than works," but he wrote in his "Essays To Do Good" that, "though we are justified by [faith] , yet good works are required of us to justify our faith " "A workless faith is a worthless faith " " "A holy heart will induce a man to do good with all his heart " " "Much of our salvation consists in doing good works " " "Let no man pretend the name of Christian, who does not approve the proposal of a perpetual endeavor to do good in the world " " "Yea, unworthy to be deemed a man, is he, who is not for doing good among men " " "Repentance is to inquire, not only what we have done, but also, what we have to do " "

He believed, with our contemporary literary humanists, that first "every man [should] devise what good may be done for the correction of what is yet amiss in his own heart and life " " Then, we should branch out and improve our neighbors. At the beginning of each entry in his diary for a long period of years stand the letters "G D", which mean Good Designed for that day. He wrote, "It has been a maxim with me, that a power to do good, not only gives a right unto it, but also makes the doing of it a duty " With his efforts on behalf of inoculation, his organization of a society in Boston for the betterment of the condition of slaves, his volume of "Essays To Do Good," his prayers for all comers, and his numerous activities in Boston, he might, with facetious truthfulness, be termed the first Boy Scout.

¹⁹ Mather, *Essays To Do Good* (Improved by George Burder New York: Whiting and Watson, 1815), 40-42

²⁰ *Ibid*, 43

²¹ *Ibid*, 45

²² *Ibid*, 26-27

²³ *Ibid*, 51

²⁴ *Ibid*, 50-51

²⁵ *Diary*, Part II, 670

Along with a resolution to do good went a determination to improve every moment of precious time "I was once emptying the cistern of nature," he wrote in his "Diary," "and making water at the wall At the same time, there came a dog, who did so too, before me Thought I 'What mean, and vile things are the children of men, in this mortal state' How much do our natural necessities abase us, and place us in some regard, on the same level with the very dogs' My thought proceeded 'Yet I will be a more noble creature, and at the very time, when my natural necessities debase me into the condition of the beast, my spirit shall (I say, at that very time') rise and soar, and fly up, towards the employment of the angel' Accordingly I resolved, that it should be my ordinary practice, whenever I step to answer the one or other necessity of nature, to make it the opportunity of shaping in my mind some holy, noble, divine thought " "

This was improving his time for his own benefit, he also extended his efforts for the improvement of others In his "Diary," he wrote, "At a table, where, I being the youngest of the company, it was not proper for me to discourse at all, and the discourses of others were too trivial, to be worthy of my attention—Casting my eye upon the gentlewoman that carved for us," he meditated, "Lord, carve, of thy graces and comforts, a rich portion, unto that person " Seeing "a gentlewoman very beautiful," he would pray, "Lord, beautify the soul of that person with thy comeliness " "In passing along the street, I have set myself to bless thousands of persons, who never knew that I did it, with secret wishes, after this manner sent unto heaven for them " Upon seeing a lame man he prayed, "Lord, help that man, to walk uprightly " Seeing children at play, "Lord, let not these children always forget the work, which they came into the world upon " Seeing a man on horseback, "Lord, thy creatures do serve that man, help him to serve his Maker " Seeing "one who (as I had

heard) had spoken very reproachfully and injuriously of me," "Lord, bless and spare and save that person, even as my own soul May that person share with me, in all the salvations of the Lord " "

5

It would be unjust to Mather to believe that these entries in his "Diary" were insincere and designed only for the admiring eyes of posterity. As one pores over scores and hundreds of pages of it, one ends by believing that they are the sincere outpourings of a man who, no matter how egotistical and unpleasing were his relations sometimes with his associates, was nevertheless making great efforts to humble himself before God and to do good to his fellows. He wrote in his "Diary" in 1711, "when I find myself barren of good devices and my enquiries after them in my thoughts not presently and easily answered, [I] form a more deliberate act of resignation, wherein I confess my inability to so much as think a good thought, and I beseech the glorious God, who is my father, and my savior, and my leader, and who forms the spirit of man within him, to take possession of my mind, and lead me to such inventions for the doing of good, as may be pleasing unto him, and for the service of his kingdom and interest. In the way of this unexceptionable Quietism, I still find thoughts of a surprising tendency to good, strongly darted into my mind, thoughts of too superior a character for me to pretend that they are my own " "

Mather's "Diary" is a connecting link, in its vivid combination of human interest and divine aspiration, between the famous "Diary" of Samuel Sewall and the spiritual "Personal Narrative" of Jonathan Edwards. " Mather's ecstatic adoration of God and Christ showed much of the enthralling fervor

²⁷ *Ibid*, Part I, 81-84

²⁸ *Ibid*, Part II, 102-103

²⁹ See *post*, 80-81

of Edwards, but Mather's main concern usually was not so directly with God as with doing good to men and thus glorifying God through works. He took issue with Edwards, implicitly, when he wrote, in connection with inoculation, that he would "much rather die for my conformity to the blessed Jesus in essays to save the lives of men from the destroyer, than for some truths, though precious ones, to which many martyrs testified formerly in the flames of Smithfield." It is ironical to recall in this connection that Edwards, who put his reliance on faith rather than works, died from an inoculation against small-pox. Verily, faith even with works may be death.

Mather's constant reliance upon prayer suggests the later Theodore Parker, and his constant, unuttered, meditated good wishes for himself and for others might well have suggested long afterward to Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, if she knew of them,³⁰ the psychological value of holding good thoughts. It is to be regretted, however, that in his case his benevolent thoughts did not more fully meliorate his personality. His "unexceptionable quietism" suggests the "guidance" of the present Oxford Group Movement.³¹

For his emphasis on ethics as a part of religion, his insistence that being good and doing good is the essence of the Christian life, and his championship of science against religious prejudice, Cotton Mather deserves the admiration of modernists. He was a forerunner, in these respects, of Franklin, Paine, Parker, and the Ethical Culture movement.

³⁰ No biographer of Mrs. Eddy, so far as I have been able to discover, suggests that she was influenced by Cotton Mather.

³¹ For a good explanation of this new but fruitful religious movement, see Grensted, L. W., *What is the Oxford Group?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), especially 3-16.

V

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN YANKEE COSMOPOLITAN

1

IN HIS seventy-ninth year, on May 12, 1782, Benjamin Franklin wrote to the patriotic Rev Samuel Mather of Boston, that reading "Essays To Do Good" written by his father, "gave me such a turn of thinking, as to have an influence on my conduct through life, for I have always set a greater value on the character of a doer of good, than on any other type of reputation, and if I have been a useful citizen, the public owes the advantage of it to that book" ¹

There seems to be a great distance between Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin Yet the latter not only listened to the preaching of the former as a boy in Boston, where he was born in 1705, but through his written sermons received a permanent influence which remained so strong after his settlement in Philadelphia that, as he wrote in his autobiography, he attended a Presbyterian church until the minister "disgusted" him by harping upon doctrine instead of works ² The utilitarian influence of that original Yankee, Samuel Sewall, who instructed the captains of his vessels to say daily prayers as insurance against hurtful "acts of God", ³ was mingled with the influence of "works" of Cotton Mather until, as Parrington wrote, Franklin was "a man who is less concerned with the

¹ Franklin, *Works* (ed John Bigelow New York G P Putnam, 1888 10 vols), VIII, 484, I, 44

² *Ibid.*, I, 173

³ Sewall, *Letter-Book* (*Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, Series Six, I-II), Sailing Orders, November 14, 1687, I, 67

golden pavements of the City of God than that the cobblestones on Chestnut street in Philadelphia should be well and evenly laid, who troubles less to save his soul from burning hereafter than to protect his neighbors' houses by organizing an efficient fire-company, who is less regardful of the light that never was on sea and land than of a new-model street lamp to light the steps of the belated wayfarer " "

In his autobiography, he recorded that when, in reply to an invitation to stop in Franklin's home, the Methodist evangelist, Whitefield, promised that "if I made that kind offer for Christ's sake, I should not miss of a reward," he replied, "Don't let me be mistaken, it was not for Christ's sake, but for your sake " "One of our common acquaintances remarked," continued the autobiography, "that, knowing it to be the custom of the saints, when they received any favor, to shift the burden of the obligation [to] heaven, I had contrived to fix it on earth " " In a letter written to his mother to destroy her fears of his irreligion, he wrote that "vital religion has always suffered, when orthodoxy was more regarded than virtue, and the Scriptures assure me that on the last day we shall not be examined [as to] what we thought, but what we did, and our recommendation will not be that we said Lord' Lord' but that we did good to our fellow creatures " "

In the light of the influence of the Calvinistic Sewall and Mather it scarcely follows, as Parrington wrote, that "the Calvinism in which he was bred left not the slightest trace upon him " " Indeed, Franklin might be considered the product and culmination of Puritanism in several of its principal American trends Although he was "a free-thinking man of the world, entirely out of sympathy with straight-laced and

³ Parrington, Vernon L., *The Colonial Mind, 1620-1800* (Main Currents in American Thought, I New York Harcourt, Brace, 1927), 178

⁴ *Works*, I, 209

⁵ Quoted by Fay, Bernard, *Franklin the Apostle of Modern Times* (Boston Little, Brown, 1929), 183

⁶ Parrington, I, 165

stiff-necked upholders of barren rites and ceremonies," Stuart Pratt Sherman wrote that he exhibited "all the essential characteristics of the Puritan, dissatisfaction, revolt, a new vision, discipline, and a passion for making the new vision prevail " "

He broke with the church over the matters of theology and "works", but not only did he continue outside the church to emphasize humanitarianism through science, philanthropy, and politics, but also the ethical-humanistic virtues of self-control and moderation. In his "Autobiography", he wrote, "It was about this time [of leaving the church] that I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wished to live without committing any fault at any time, and to conquer all that natural inclination, custom or company might lead me into " He proceeded to set up, and then systematically practise, thirteen virtues which he considered paramount. At the same time that he was being expansively humanitarian he also stressed the humanistic self-discipline of "temperance", "moderation", and the determination to "avoid extremes " The other eleven virtues at which he aimed, and which he practised a week at a time with a chart on which to record his success, were "silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity and humility " " Perhaps this system of Franklin's was the inspiration of our modern orgy of "weeks", such as "clean up the backyard week" and "better babies week", until it is estimated that there are now one hundred and fifty-two "weeks" in the American year.

It must be admitted that Franklin failed to practise all these virtues consistently, and Theodore Parker had to qualify his admiration of him with the admission that he had an illegitimate son and sometimes kept low company " "

⁷ Sherman, Stuart Pratt, *The Genius of America* (New York: Scribner, 1925), 68.

⁸ *Works*, I, 174-182.

⁹ Parker, Theodore, *Historic Americans* (Boston: Horace B. Fuller, 1878), 17-18, 22.

Franklin grounded his "virtues on reason and experience rather than authority",¹⁰ and in this he showed not only reason but wisdom. Instead of throwing over morality along with the church, he perceived that "no pleasure can give satisfaction or prove advantageous to a reasonable mind, which is not attended with the restraints of reason."¹¹ Bernard Fay, one of the most recent biographers of Franklin, pointed out that "he did not preach the Christianity of Boston or Rome, but a rationalistic doctrine which 'extended' them, though suppressing at the same time the mystical element and revelation."¹² He had the wisdom to perceive that, "though certain actions might not be bad because they were forbidden by [revelation], or good because it commanded them, yet probably those actions might be forbidden because they were bad for us, or commanded because they were beneficial."¹³ "Deny self, for self's sake."¹⁴ He extricated himself from the Puritan error of mistaking the means for the end.

In breaking with the church, he avoided the extremism of such religious rebels as Thomas Paine. Franklin never seems to have felt the ridiculing and destructive instinct. In the last year of his life, he wrote, "I have ever let others enjoy their religious sentiments, without reflecting on them for those that appeared to me unsupportable and even absurd."¹⁵ Although he left the Presbyterian Church, he later supported the Church of England. But when George Whitefield came to Philadelphia, Franklin was one of his moral and financial pillars, even assisting prominently in building a temple there for him. When he visited England later, although he went to visit Whitefield, he made the acquaintance of Unitarian ministers, "whose liberalism pleased him."¹⁶

¹⁰ Sherman, 69

¹¹ Quoted by Fay, 54

¹² *Ibid.*, 163

¹³ *Works*, I, 139

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, X, 194

¹⁵ Fay, 339

He was more avowedly a Free Mason than a Unitarian in his religion, being an officer in Free Masonry in France as well as America. Fay wrote that "his career was the best example of their ideals" " " "He was faithful to the spirit of Masonry, as it was then described. 'It tends to promote Friendship, Society, Mutual Assistance, and Good Fellowship' " " " In fact, he had already made these ideals his aim before he became a Free Mason.

No church or organization was final for Franklin. He was really a religious cosmopolitan long before he became a scientific or political one. When he aided in building the temple for Whitefield he wrote that "the design in building [was not] to accommodate any particular sect, but the inhabitants in general, so that even if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach Mohammedanism to us he would find a pulpit at his service" " " This is Roger Williams speaking in Franklin.

He had a mind which, so far from being limited even to the truth wherever it might be found in the present, also looked to the future. He wrote, "The world is daily increasing in experimental knowledge, and let no man flatter the age with pretending we have arrived at a perfection of our discoveries" " " He seemed to approve a Dunker whom he quoted in his Autobiography. When Franklin asked him why, in order to combat false impressions, the Dunkers did not publish their creed, he was told that this had been proposed but not agreed to because "from time to time He has been pleased to afford us further light, and our principles have been improving, and our errors diminishing. We fear that, if we should once print our confession of faith, we should feel ourselves as if bound and confined by it, and perhaps be unwilling to receive further improvement, and our successors still more

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 354

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 147

¹⁸ *Works*, I, 207

¹⁹ Quoted by Fay, 165

so, as conceiving what we their elders and founders had done, to be something sacred, never to be departed from " " This answer was not only worthy of Franklin himself, but it was in the spirit of John Robinson

It was in this modest spirit that Franklin approached theological dogmas To Cotton Mather, reason in practice had been thoroughly circumscribed by faith, but to Franklin, reason was as applicable to religion as to other realms In his youth, he was "a Deist, vowed to the cult of reason and liberty " " In 1728, he wrote for his own use a "little liturgy, or form of prayer," entitled "Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion," in which he minimized dogma and doctrine " In a letter to President Ezra Stiles of Yale, he wrote in the last year of his life, "Here is my creed I believe in one God, creator of the universe That he governs it by his Providence That he ought to be worshipped That the most acceptable service we render him is doing good to his other children That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this These I take to be the fundamental principles of all sound religion

As to Jesus of Nazareth I think the system of morals, and his religion, as he left them to us, to be the best the world ever saw or is likely to see, but I apprehend it has received various corrupting changes, and I have, with most of the present dissenters in England, some doubts as to his divinity, though it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it " "

2

Thomas Jefferson was more obviously deistic in religion than Franklin Indeed, he was not alarmed even at the pros-

²⁰ *Works*, I, 222

²¹ *Ibid*, I, 138, 172

²² *Ibid*, I, 174

²³ *Ibid*, X, 193-194

pect of agnosticism Writing from Paris in 1787 to his young ward and nephew, Peter Carr, he advised him to "shake off all the fears and servile prejudice under which weak minds are servilely crouched Fix Reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blind-folded fear Your own reason is the only oracle given you by heaven, and you are answerable not for the rightness but uprightness of the decision " "

This lack of dogmatism, reliance upon reason, and desire for free inquiry, seem to have been Jefferson's religious guides He wrote in his "Notes on Virginia", that "our rulers can have no authority over such natural rights, only as we have submitted to them The rights of conscience we never submitted, we could not submit The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty Gods, or no God It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg " " Parrington remarked of him, "a free soul, he loved freedom enough to deny it to none " " Jefferson himself declared, "I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man " "

He carried out his resolution, laboring from 1777 to 1786 to have the Virginia legislature pass his bill for establishing complete religious freedom In founding the University of Virginia in 1819, of which he was so proud that he desired the fact to be included in his epitaph, he not only provided for religious and academic freedom for professors but even out-

²⁴ Jefferson, *Writings* (ed Albert E Bergh Washington, D C Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903), VI, 258-261

²⁵ *Ibid*, II, 221

²⁶ Parrington, I, 355

²⁷ Jefferson, *Writings*, X, 175

lawed compulsory chapel attendance and established the "elective system" of studies for students.²⁸ Not only for the common man but for intellectual leaders, and not only for the adult citizen but the immature student, he insisted upon a free and inquiring spirit both in knowledge and in religion. This ideal is not yet consistently attained even in our great universities.

His attitude toward Jesus was similar to, although less equivocal than, Franklin's. In a letter on April 21, 1803, to the deistic Universalist, the noted physician, Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, he compared Jesus with Socrates and Epictetus, and wrote that when Jesus died his reason had not yet attained "the maximum of its energy, nor [had] the course of his preaching presented occasions for developing a complete system of morals. Hence the doctrines which he really delivered were defective as a whole, and fragments only of what he did deliver have come to us, mutilated, misstated, and often unintelligible." "To the corruptions of Christianity I am indeed opposed, but not to the genuine precepts of Jesus himself. I am a Christian, but I am a Christian in the only sense in which I believe Jesus wished anyone to be, sincerely attached to his doctrine in preference to all others, ascribing to him all human excellence, and believing that he never claimed any other." "The question of his being a member of the Godhead, claimed by some of his followers, is foreign to the present view, which is merely an estimate of the intrinsic merits of his doctrines."²⁹ He corresponded with the great English Unitarian preacher, scientist and philosopher, Joseph Priestley, on the possibility of arranging the word of Jesus in such a way as to make the nature of his religion plain to the simplest understanding, and in 1816 he

²⁸ Hirst, Francis W., *Life and Letters of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 578. Bruce, Philip A., *History of the University of Virginia* (New York, 1920. 4 vols.), I, 1-275.

²⁹ Jefferson, *Writings*, X, 380-394.

wrote of his successful efforts to do this, "A more beautiful or precious morsel of ethics [than those of Jesus] I have never seen, it is a document in proof that I am a real Christian, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus" ³⁰ He ascribed to Jesus "all human excellence", and in asserting that he did not develop "a complete system of morals" he merely denied to him the perfection of divinity He attended the Episcopal Church with his family, but Albert E Bergh, editor of his collected writings, wrote that he was "what would today be called a conservative Unitarian, and shared the sentiments of Dr Channing" ³¹

Jefferson unequivocally announced his Unitarianism when he wrote too optimistically to Dr Benjamin Waterhouse of Harvard, on June 26, 1822, "I trust that there is not a young man now living who will not die a Unitarian" ³² In similar sanguine vein he wrote in 1822, "The pure and simple unity of the Creator of the Universe is now all but ascendant in the Eastern States, it is dawning in the West, and advancing towards the South, and I confidently expect that the present generation will see Unitarianism become the general religion of the United States" ³³

3

Franklin not only held a practical religion but he put it into practice He theorized less than Jefferson, but perhaps he practiced as fully His utilitarianism gave a practical bent to his interest in science, and his inventions and discoveries made him internationally known as a scientist before he became an international figure in other fields.

After he retired in 1743 from his business of printing, publishing and bookselling, at the age of thirty-seven, he de-

³⁰ *Ibid*, XIV, 385

³¹ *Ibid*, XV, 1v

³² *Ibid*, XV, 385

³³ *Ibid*, XV, 409

voted himself largely to science. He invented a stove with an open fire-box, bi-focal spectacles, the harmonica, the lightning-rod, smokeless street lamps, non-smoking chimneys, a simplified clock, a device for lifting books from high shelves, devised a copper plate press and a type mold for printing; experimented in phonetic writing, investigated balloons; advocated the use of oil for soothing rough seas, studied storms and observed that northeastern storms on the Atlantic coast move against the wind, investigated the temperature of the Gulf Stream, earthquakes and the aurora borealis, proved the identity of lightning and electricity; investigated mesmerism for the French government, discovered that human respiration gives off unhealthy ingredients into the air which is purified by plants, thus delving into geology, physics, meteorology, agriculture, medicine, chemistry, navigation, and thermodynamics.

"Puritanism, which in Robinson and Mather was predominantly rational," wrote Sherman, "becomes in Franklin predominantly scientific. With magnificent fresh moral force, he seeks for the will of God in nature, and applies his discoveries with immense practical benevolence to ameliorating the common lot of mankind. His vision of the good life includes bringing every faculty of mind and body to its highest usefulness." Fay wrote that he even conceived of virtue as a "reasonable science." He not only made a science of virtue, which he conceived of both as humanitarian and humanistic, but he also made science a virtue—or at least a fashionable accomplishment. Indeed, it was his scientific achievements, wrote Fay, which first made Franklin fashionable in the eyes of the Philadelphia aristocracy.

As an organizer and philanthropist, he showed practical ingenuity in the social as well as the scientific field. He organized the Junto Club, out of which arose, at his instiga-

³⁴ Sherman, 69-70

³⁵ Fay, 164

tion, the first public (subscription) library in America. Through his newspaper he initiated projects for police and fire protection, paving and lighting facilities, in Philadelphia. He had an important part in founding the first hospital, the American Philosophical Society, and the Philadelphia Academy, out of which speedily grew the University of Pennsylvania.

As a politician and statesman, he was not only useful but indispensable. He was Clerk of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania in 1736, Postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737, member of the Common Council of Philadelphia, and an alderman, Postmaster General of America in 1753, commissioner from Pennsylvania to the Albany Congress of all the colonies in 1754, at which he presented a plan of union, agent in England for Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Georgia, much of the time from 1757 to 1775, member of the Continental Congress, agent and later Minister Plenipotentiary to France from 1778 to 1785, member of the Peace Commission at the close of the Revolution, President of Pennsylvania from 1785 to 1787, and delegate to the Constitutional Convention. He was the only man who helped to write all four documents which marked the transformation of the colonies into the nation: the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Amity and Defense with France, the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain, and the Constitution of the United States.

Franklin's life was an abundant life, under the covenants of reason and of works. His personal life was not faultless, but perhaps no one has yet equalled him in making rational religion practicable and practical. Said he, "If I should escape shipwreck, I should not build a church, but a lighthouse." Said Theodore Parker in praise of him, "Institutions for theology have the names of theologic apostles, but institutions for humanity bear the name of this great apostle of benevolence."

³⁶ Quoted by Parker, 59

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44

Jefferson was quite as much a rationalist and humanitarian as was Franklin. The unique significance of Franklin for liberal religion in America lies in the fact that he was not only a rationalistic humanitarian, but that he was also a rationalistic humanist in the sense of the word in which it is now used by such literary humanists as Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, Norman Foerster, and others. That is to say, Franklin believed not only in doing good but also in being good. He not only wished to improve others, but he wished first to improve himself. He strove to achieve self-discipline, self-control, and moderation in everything. But unlike our contemporary literary humanists, who are conservatives in theology and are thus opposed to such present-day religious humanists as John Dewey, Harry Elmer Baines, and Charles Francis Potter,¹⁸ Franklin was definitely rationalistic in his religion. To be at once a rationalist, a humanitarian, and a literary humanist is a unique achievement.

¹⁸ See *post*, 323-328

VI

HOSEA BALLOU SON OF THE LOVING GOD

1

WHEN HOSEA BALLOU was only a boy, he revealed his lifelong reliance upon reason and common sense by asking his father, "Suppose I had the skill and power out of an inanimate substance to make an animate, and should make one, at the same time knowing that this creature of mine would suffer everlasting misery,—would my act of creating this creature be an act of goodness?" "The question troubled my father," wrote Ballou long afterward, "and I let it pass without an answer"¹ But years later he was asked, "What will become of a man who goes out of the world cursing and swearing and calling on God to damn his soul to hell?" To this he replied with a question which was also an answer "Do you believe that a righteous God would answer the vile prayer of such a wicked wretch?"²

The goodness and love of God toward man, and not the goodness of human nature, was the keynote of Ballou's message While the Unitarians, like Rousseau, believed that human nature is inherently good and that therefore man is too good to be damned by God, Ballou remained a realist and set the pace for the Universalists by declaring that God is too good to damn man These doctrines of the universal love of God and the consequent universal salvation of men became the central doctrines of the Universalist Church He was

¹ Quoted by Ballou, Maturin Murray, *Biography of Rev Hosea Ballou* (Boston: Abel Tompkins, 1852), 36

² Quoted in *ibid*, 168

asked, "If your doctrine be true, how is it that it has never been preached before?" Here in the nineteenth century it would seem to be a new discovery." He replied that "it has been taught by two eloquent witnesses", so long as the sun has shone and the rain fallen on mankind. These faithful agents of Almighty love have ever taught the doctrine of impartial grace to all men, they dispense their blessings on rich and poor, high and low, and thus bear witness of the character of Him who sends them."³ His son wrote that even "the fierce midnight storm, with its thunder-peals and lightning-flashes, had no terrors for him, he knew better than to interpret it as a manifestation of the wrath and vengeful fury of the Deity, for he knew that it was to be followed by a purer and healthier atmosphere, by the glowing bow of promise, and by brighter smiles from the unshadowed sun."⁴

Ballou "would never tire of depicting the Almighty through the spirit of the most beautiful emblems in nature, and even deducing from them the most amiable and glorious traits of Deity."⁵ His love of nature and perception of God in nature were those of such romanticists as the English poet, Wordsworth. Ballou wrote that "all those worlds which sparkle in the wide expanse of heaven are full of the goodness of the Lord, and if time be all full of divine goodness, so is eternity, and if God be universally good temporally speaking, so is he in relation to spiritual things. What infinite reason do we have to exercise our hearts in gratitude to God, and our affections in love to him, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy! With what propriety may we say, 'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord'." "True religion," he declared "presents the Father of our spirits as the most lovely character of which the mind can possibly conceive."⁶ Calvinists, on the

³ Quoted in *ibid*, 227

⁴ *Ibid*, 260

⁵ *Ibid*, 258

⁶ Quoted in *ibid*, 262-264

other hand, were worshipping a God less noble than were even many of themselves

2

"We have often been asked", wrote Ballou, "why we preach the doctrine we profess, as this doctrine maintains that our Creator has made the eternal state secure to all men, and that the happiness of that state rests on the divine favor, and not on any influence which we may exercise in this life." But, he reasoned, if my earthly father were maligned as a cruel monster I would defend him, especially if among those to be deceived were "my brethren, and his own beloved children" who would be "tormented day and night with fear that they and their children will fall under the dreadful scourge of our father's wrath".⁷ He regarded himself as the defender of God against the libels of such Calvinists as Jonathan Edwards, who is most widely known as the most violent Calvinist to "malign [God] as a cruel monster". This he did thirty years before Ballou was born.

Born in Windsor, Connecticut, in 1703, the son and grandson of Puritan ministers, Edwards was precocious in the fields of theology, science, and philosophy. When he was ten years old, he wrote a treatise on "The Nature of the Soul". At twelve, he wrote a treatise on "The Flying Spider", which exhibited scientific observation, experimentation, and cautious and open-minded postulation of hypotheses. During much of his life, science attracted his interest, he dabbled in botany, physiology, geology, physics, astronomy.⁸

At about the same early age, he underwent a pseudo-religious conversion, which he frankly recorded in his spiritual autobiography, entitled "The Personal Narrative". "When I was a boy, some years before I went to college, at a time of remarkable awakening in my father's congregation. I

⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 237-240

⁸ McGiffert, Arthur Cushman, Jr., *Jonathan Edwards* (New York Harper, 1932), 15-17

experienced I know not what kind of delight in religion. My mind was much engaged in it, and had much self-righteous pleasure, and it was my delight to abound in religious duties.

And I am ready to think, many are deceived with such affections, and such a kind of delight as I then had in religion, and mistake it for grace." ⁹ His real conversion came later.

A few years later, during his course at Yale, he showed his precociousness as a philosopher. His originality and independence of thought cannot be proved, but at this early age he gave expression to idealistic philosophy similar to that of the contemporary English philosopher, Bishop George Berkeley. Edwards wrote that "the material universe is absolutely dependent on the conception of the mind for its existence." It is "impossible that the world should exist from eternity without a mind." "Hence we learn the necessity of the eternal existence of an all-comprehending Mind." The universe or material world exists "nowhere but in the divine mind." ¹⁰ This early concept of God and the world was to be a springboard for his later religious philosophy, and his precociousness in theology, science and philosophy was prophetic.

He was graduated from Yale in 1720, and in 1727 he succeeded his grandfather as minister at Northampton, Massachusetts. The Northampton pulpit was considered the most prominent, west of Boston, in New England, and Edwards occupied it for nearly twenty-four years, until he was forced to resign in 1750 by the liberal majority of his congregation. During his pastorate there, he composed his famous sermons and published collections of them entitled "God Glorified in Man's Dependence," and "Concerning the Religious Affections." But it was during the following miserable years as a missionary to the Indians at Stockbridge, Massachusetts, that he wrote his great "Treatise on the Freedom of the Will" as

⁹ Edwards, *Works*, (ed. Edward Williams and Edward Parsons. London: James Black, 1817. 8 vols.), I, 28.

¹⁰ Quoted by McGiffert, 20-22.

well as other works on "Original Sin," "The Nature of True Virtue," and "The End For Which God Created the World " In 1758 he was invited to succeed his son-in-law, Aaron Burr, whose son became vice-president of the United States, as president of Princeton He had been settled in this position only two months, and had not yet been publicly installed in office, when he died from inoculation for smallpox

The first of Edwards' famous theological pronouncements, chronologically, is his most famous sermon, first delivered at Enfield, Massachusetts, in 1741, and entitled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God " In this sermon he exclaimed, "The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked, you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder, and you have no interest in any mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you have ever done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment " "

In another sermon, probably preached about three years later, entitled "Men Naturally God's Enemies," he kept the figure of the viper in completing his description of universal hate In the earlier sermon he had described God as hating man, and now he described man as hating God "When you come to be a firebrand of hell you will appear as you are, a viper indeed . Then will you as a serpent spit poison at God and vent your rage and malice in fearful blasphemies " "

Such masculine fervor of conviction commands respect, and Paul Elmer More wrote that Edwards presented "a series

¹¹ *Works*, VI, 458

¹² *Ibid* , V, 314

of pictures [of hell] beside which the Inferno of Dante seems like the naiveté of a child " " It is not difficult to believe what was recorded of the effect of such sermons, that his audience hung on to its pews in terror as though hell were fermenting in the basement of the church In fact, his hellfire sermons were a part of the religious revival which is still known as the "Great Awakening" and which he helped to start and to carry on Perhaps he was partly carried away by his own fervor or success His latest, and perhaps best, biographer, Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr, wrote that Edwards "preached countless sermons [during his career] Over a thousand of them were transmitted to his literary executor at his death The 'hell-fire' discourses do not bulk large when his sermons as a whole are taken into account They are far from typical The principle of the uncalculating love of God found frequent and ample expression As a matter of fact, Edwards played upon the whole gamut of human sensitivity, varying his touch to strike different moods and tempers " "

A less friendly critic wrote recently that Edwards "spent more time convincing people of the wrath of God than in holding out hope of His mercy," but that his Calvinistic doctrine of God's arbitrary election of some souls to heaven and damnation of the rest to hell "made it incumbent on him to temper his presentation of hell with an occasional picturing of the chance of salvation " " He did this in the sermon entitled "Great Guilt No Obstacle To Pardon " "The mercy of God is as sufficient for the pardon of the greatest sins, as for the least, and that because his mercy is infinite That which is infinite, is as much above what is great, as it is above what is small Thus God being infinitely great, he is as much above kings as he is above beggars, he is as much above the

¹³ More, Paul Elmer, *A New England Group and Others (Shelburne Essays, Eleventh Series* Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1921), 43

¹⁴ McGiffert, 84

¹⁵ Snyder, Franklin B, and Edward D, *A Book of American Literature* (New York Macmillan, 1930), 1112

highest angel, as he is above the meanest worm One finite measure does not come any nearer to the extent of what is infinite than another God may now pardon the greatest sinners without any prejudice to the honor of his holiness " "

In this sermon, he seemed to appreciate the majesty of mercy, and yet it is stubbornness, rather than mercy on the part of God, which is presented Certain individuals are fore-ordained to election for salvation, and no matter what these "elect" may do, they will be saved This is not mercy, which would scarcely discriminate between persons to the detriment of some, rather, it is favoritism Favoritism is not even justice, which, in turn, is less than mercy

These two types of sermons exhibit two phases of Edwards' theology In the "hell-fire" sermons he was primitively and anthropomorphically religious, but when he discussed God's infinity and mercy, he began to be philosophically religious In the first, he thought of God as a monster, in the second, as spirit In his lyrically mystical autobiography, "The Personal Narrative", written from 1740 to 1743, he conceived of God as majesty and love He wrote, in the manner of Ballou and Wordsworth, that "God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything, in the sun, moon and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky, in the grass, flowers, trees, in the water, and all nature I often used to sit and view the moon for continuance, and in the day, spend much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things in the meantime, singing forth, with a low voice, my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer And scarce anything, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning, formerly nothing had been so terrible to me I felt God, so to speak, at the first appearance of a thunderstorm; and used to take the opportunity, at such times, to fix myself in order to view

the clouds, and see the lightning's play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God's thunder, which oftentimes was exceedingly entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God " "

Here were hints of both the "hell-fire" sermons and his doctrine of God's sovereignty, which he was to develop fully in his "Treatise on the Freedom of the Will" For Ballou, thunder and lightning were not entertaining, but they had no terrors for him, because "he knew that it was to be followed by a purer and healthier atmosphere", for Edwards it was entertaining because it was "the majestic and awful voice" of God Edwards seemed to revel in this "awful voice" just as the righteous in Michael Wigglesworth's Calvinistic poem entitled "The Day of Doom" revelled in the awful voice of God's damnation of their enemies "From my childhood up," wrote Edwards, "my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased, leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me " But "now I saw further, and my reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it " "

Even while he was a student at Yale, he had conceived of God "in terms of absolute Mind and Being," and McGiffert wrote that the shift from this concept to a "Calvinistic theology that thought of God in terms of absolute Will was an easy one " "A relativistic theology with [its] curtailment of the divine omnipotence in favor of human initiative and responsibility could hardly prove attractive to [him] One to whom God was all in all could be satisfied with nothing less than an absolutist theology such as Calvinism " "

¹⁷ *Ibid* , I, 31-32

¹⁸ *Ibid* , I, 29

¹⁹ McGiffert, 34

He even made a start toward pantheism but, unlike Emerson, whom he suggested more than once, he could not say, "I like impersonality" He wrote that God would not be "in his most complete and glorious state without emanation of his own infinite fullness" He believed that "God is the total order of things," wrote McGiffert, "for it has proceeded from him"† In his early speculations, he conceived of God as Mind, in his "hell-fire" sermons, he conceived of Him as a monster, in the sermons on pardon, he conceived of Him as mercy, in "The Personal Narrative", as majesty and love, and in "The Treatise on the Freedom of the Will", as Will These were great concepts, but they ended in extreme Calvinism

"The gist of the question, as he saw it," wrote McGiffert, "was the reconciliation of the Calvinistic doctrine of the omnipotence of God with the personal responsibility of the individual" He opposed both those who, on the one hand, insisted that predestination made individual effort futile, and those on the other hand, who insisted, "I am the captain of my soul" He believed, according to McGiffert, that both theories were at the same time "equally true and untrue" Men must act, but "they must recognize that their activity cannot guarantee them success, for there is a mysterious fact of arbitrariness in the universe which precludes all calculable connection between effort and achievement" "God alone saves, but he uses means to do so Those means are a hearty desire for heaven . . . firm resolution, self-discipline and obedience You may not be saved if you engage in these good works, for you cannot bargain with . . . God, yet without them you will not be saved either" Edwards himself wrote that "God must do all, and yet we do all" "

He believed that "the free man is he who by disposition and habit cannot but choose the good", "to be at liberty to play the fool" would be a sorry kind of freedom He believed

† *Ibid*, 180

²⁰ *Ibid*, 51-53

that the universe exhibits law and order, his idea of the necessity which binds the creation was that it is "the certain connection between cause and effect" ²¹ Even God, he conceived, is bound by them, God's will is "determined by moral necessity" ²² In this, he differed from Calvin "Like certain ancient Greeks," wrote McGiffert, "Edwards conceived of a power superior even to God, the power of wisdom and righteousness Even God himself was not free to be evil or foolish" ²³ But one would suppose that Edwards understood that wisdom and righteousness are attributes of God, and not powers over God

He explained the role which he thought actions or works play in salvation in his great "Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections" McGiffert called this treatise "a noble definition of religion at its best It presents the most notable single discussion of religion America has produced" ²⁴ With a keen social consciousness, Edwards wrote in this treatise that "true religion is practical", ²⁵ "the exercise and fruit" of religion is "Christian practise" ²⁶ Some "pretend a great love to men's souls that are not compassionate and sociable toward their bodies The making a great show of love, pity, and distress for souls, costs them nothing, but in order to show mercy to men's bodies they must part with money out of their pockets" ²⁷ "If a Christian is helpful to others in calamity, ready to bear their burdens with them, willing to spend his substance for them, and to suffer many inconveniences in his worldly interest to promote the good of others' souls and bodies, is not this a more credible manifestation of a spirit of love to men, than only a man's telling what love he

²¹ *Works*, I, 143, 146-147, 165-166

²² *Ibid*, I, 361, 168, 255-256, 357-358

²³ McGiffert, 156-159

²⁴ *Ibid*, 69

²⁵ *Works*, IV, 14

²⁶ *Ibid*, IV, 275.

²⁷ Quoted by McGiffert, 78-79

felt to others at certain times—how he pitied their souls, how his soul was in travail for them, and how he felt a hearty love and pity for his enemies—when in his behavior he seems to be of a very selfish spirit, close and niggardly ” ” ”

Good works is “the best evidence of friendship towards Christ ” ” ” “There may be several good evidences that a tree is a fig tree, but the highest and most proper evidence of it is that it actually bears figs ” ” ” the essence of all true religion lies in holy love, and in this divine affection—and habitual disposition to it, that light which is the foundation of it, and those things which are its fruits—consists the whole of religion ” ” ” “This definition alone,” wrote McGiffert, “would entitle Edwards to a prominent place among the philosophers of religion ” ” ” Paul Elmer More recently called Edwards “the greatest theologian yet produced in this country ” ” ”

Great as his conception of religion was, he, like Robinson, still sought truth In his student days, he wrote, “Resolved, if ever I live to years, that I will be impartial to hear the reasons of all pretended discoveries and receive them if rational how long soever I have been used to another way of thinking ” ” ” In his “Treatise of the Freedom of the Will,” he wrote, “I am willing my proofs should be thoroughly examined and if there be nothing but begging the question or mere logomachy or dispute of words . I shall either be ready to retract what I have urged and thank the man that has done the kind part or shall be justly exposed for my obstinacy ” ” ”

Parrington admitted that Edwards tried to base the five points of Calvinism (divine providence, human depravity, effi-

²⁸ *Works*, IV, 302

²⁹ *Ibid*, IV, 333

³⁰ *Ibid*, IV, 21

³¹ McGiffert, 74-75

³² More, 53

³³ Quoted by McGiffert, 164

³⁴ Quoted in *ibid*, 164

cacious grace, divine election, the perseverance of the saints) " upon "a metaphysics that should relate them to a universal system of thought, giving them a cosmic as well as a Biblical sanction " " He pointed out that if Edwards had spent his life in the more stimulating environment of England he would have been a philosopher instead of a Calvinist " "The intellectual powers were his," he wrote, "but the inspiration was lacking " It was his fate to devote his noble gifts to the thankless task of reimprisoning the mind of New England within a system from which his nature and his powers summoned him to unshackle it He was called to be a transcendental emancipator, but he remained a Calvinist " " McGiffert differed with Parrington, writing that "by force of circumstances he came to inhabit the frontier But his mind was not on that account provincial It reached out across the sea and moved familiarly among the thoughts of men who were ushering in the modern theological and ethical era." " He was abreast of Berkeley, but, in spite of his perception of God in nature, he remained unmoved by the gathering force abroad of romanticism and democracy

Edwards, and not Roger Williams, was the real New England firebrand, and Edwards overreached himself and burned hell It was an achievement to build Calvinism into a cosmic philosophy, as Edwards endeavored with a certain success to do, but his great concept of God as absolute and infinite sovereignty " belonged to a monarchical social order With the rise of romanticism and democracy, his Mosaic concept of God as Law which thundered and smoked on Sinai, gave way to Ballou's New Testament concept of God as Love with the still small voice Like Ballou, Edwards adored God and sought

³⁵ *Ibid* , 156

³⁶ Parrington, I, 152

³⁷ *Ibid* , I, 162-163

³⁸ McGiffert, 187

³⁹ *Works*, I, 359-360

in a mystical way to become one with Him, but his God was a king rather than a father. He thought of majesty only in connection with inflexible authority. He could not appreciate, as did Ballou, Shakespeare's great lines on mercy in "The Merchant of Venice," in which mercy is conceived even as elevating majesty

"'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The enthroned monarch better than his crown,
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings,
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the heart of kings,
It is an attribute of God Himself."

Edwards was a double paradox—consciously and unconsciously. He must have been consciously paradoxical in holding to his mysticism and his doctrine of human depravity and damnation, and he presented an unconscious paradox in his intentions and his influence. It is ironical that in the end his influence was the opposite of his intention, and he fulfilled his real calling after his death. The religious enthusiasm ignited by his images of hell-fire and brimstone has been called "The Great Awakening," but Dr. John C. Adams wrote, in connection with Ballou, that this phrase is a misnomer. "The churches were only walking in sleep, and dreaming the awful nightmare of Calvinism." After the dream came the real awakening in the wide reaction toward skepticism, rationalism, and deism. "Once the horrors that lay in the background of Calvinism were disclosed to common view, the system was doomed," wrote Parrington. "In this necessary work of freeing the spirit of New England [by exhibiting the hor-

⁴⁰ Act IV, Scene 1

⁴¹ Adams, John Coleman, "Hosea Ballou and the Larger Hope", in *Pioneers of Religious Liberty in America* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1903), 272

rors of Calvinism], no other thinker played so large or so unconscious a part as Jonathan Edwards " " He helped to pave the way, unconsciously and unintentionally, for such Unitarians as James Freeman and such Universalists as Hosea Ballou Ballou went ahead, as Dr Adams expressed it in 1903, and built up "a rounded and symmetrical body of doctrine in which the whole emphasis of interpretation was shifted from Law to Love, from Vindictiveness to Discipline; from Fear to Faith, from Sovereignty to Fatherhood " " Edwards' grandson, Aaron Burr, vice-president of the United States, caught in a simple phrase the real change from Calvinism to Universalism when he declared, "God is a great deal better than most people suppose " "

3

Ballou was born in New Hampshire in 1771, thirteen years after the death of Edwards His father was a Baptist minister of Anglo-Norman descent The Ballous came to Rhode Island in 1638 His mother was from a Quaker family. This sounds like a liberal environment and heritage But his father was a Calvinist who believed in the damnation and eternal punishment of a large portion of humanity, and although Hosea joined his father's church at nineteen, he did not surrender his doubts and was speedily excommunicated for his "belief in the salvation of all men " "

He became interested in Universalist religious publications, only to be forbidden by his father to have them in his house Not long afterwards, he was seen sitting on the wood pile and reading what he admitted was a Universalist book,

⁴² Parrington, I, 159-160

⁴³ Adams, John C., *Hosea Ballou and the Gospel Renaissance of the Nineteenth Century* (Boston Universalist Publishing House, 1903), 20

⁴⁴ Quoted by Alexander, Holmes, *Aaron Burr the Proud Pretender* (New York Harper, 1937), 20

⁴⁵ M M Ballou, 41

and when he hid it there, his father came out to destroy it, only to find that it was the Bible " This was not mere boyish spunk, to him "the basis of all spiritual truth was the Bible " " His schooling was very meager, and even late in his life his library did not exceed three hundred volumes He was a constant reader, but he confined himself to quite a degree to the Scriptures and their commentaries He was "emphatically a man of one book," " as much so as the later Calvinistic Dwight L. Moody " Interpretation made a difference'

He received most of his schooling at a small town academy when he was about twenty-one years old, and then set out to teach and preach His first regular pastorate was at Dana, Massachusetts, in 1794 He went from there to Barnard, Vermont, to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to Salem, Massachusetts, and in 1817 he went to the Second Universalist Society in Boston He held that parish during the last thirty-five years of his life, until his death in 1852, at the age of eighty-one He was invited to become minister of New York and Philadelphia churches, in which he preached frequently, but when he showed these invitations to his Boston congregation it always insisted on retaining him He travelled widely and wrote constantly, he preached ten thousand sermons and his printed works would fill one hundred substantial volumes. "

4

He was not the first to believe in the doctrine of universal salvation, from which the Universalist Church took its name This doctrine had been advanced fifteen hundred years pre-

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 41-42

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 46

⁴⁸ Eddy, Richard, *A History of the Universalists in the United States* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1894), 457

⁴⁹ Adams, "Hosea Ballou and the Larger Hope," 280-281

⁵⁰ M. M. Ballou, 188-189

vously by some of the greatest of the Church fathers, notably Clement of Alexandria and Origen.⁵¹ Samuel Gorton of Rhode Island had affirmed more than a century before Ballou that "the soul now exists in eternity," and insisted that "there is no heaven or hell save in the mind, that the soul is independent of place, and the future and the past are but eternal Now."⁵² The Germans who settled Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1719 brought or imported Universalist books from Germany.⁵³ Rev Jonathan Mayhew, and Rev Jeremy Belknap, the noted historian, believed in universal salvation.⁵⁴ In 1784, Rev Charles Chauncy of the First Church in Boston published anonymously in London a tract entitled "The Salvation of All Men." In the same year, Col Ethan Allen of Vermont published his fierce Universalist volume, entitled "Reason the Only Oracle of Man."⁵⁵

Rev John Murray, who was a disciple of James Rely, a Calvinistic Universalist of London, was the principal creator and establisher of the American Universalist Church.⁵⁶ His congregation at Gloucester, Massachusetts, formed the first Universalist society in 1779. Murray, however, was a Trinitarian Calvinist, although he differed from Calvin in "predicating of all souls what Calvinism predicated of the elect only, their indissoluble union with Christ and salvation through him."⁵⁷ It was because of Jesus' retribution that "he believed in no punishment, present or future, to fall on any man for his sins."⁵⁸

⁵¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, article "Universalism"

⁵² Eddy, 372

⁵³ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (edited by James Hastings New York: Scribner, 1922), article "Universalism", by James E. Odgers

⁵⁴ Eddy, 384

⁵⁵ Koch, G. Adolph, *Republican Religion* (New York: Henry Holt, 1933), 191-192

⁵⁶ Eddy, 388

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 392

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 394-395

Ballou early became a Unitarian in his concept of deity,⁵⁹ but he was not the first Universalist to become so.⁶⁰ The Universalist convention at Philadelphia in 1790, under the guidance of Rev Elhanan Winchester and the great physician, Dr Benjamin Rush, declared Jesus to be a man-mediator between God and man.⁶¹ Universalist Unitarian doctrine preceded by about ten years the "public avowal and defense [of Unitarianism] by the Unitarian denomination as a distinct sect."⁶² Although he did not originate Unitarian Universalism, Ballou was "the most eminent and influential of all the preachers of Universalism,"⁶³ and it was he who "changed the thought of the Universalist body at large" from Trinitarianism and Calvinism to Unitarianism and Universalism.⁶⁴

It was his great "Treatise on the Atonement," published in 1805, which made him "the acknowledged leader in the Universalist Church."⁶⁵ Richard Eddy wrote, in his authoritative "History of the Universalist Church in the United States," that it is "in many respects unsurpassed by anything that has since been written on the subject,"⁶⁶ and that it became "normative thought for the whole Universalist movement." It was "the first effort to develop a theology from the sole premise of God's universal, impartial, everlasting love."⁶⁷ It "severed Universalism from its origins in Calvinism, and lifted it from controversy to a level of affirmation and construction."⁶⁸ In addition to its championship of the

⁵⁹ Ballou, Hosea *An Examination of the Doctrine of Future Retribution* (Boston: Thomas Whittemore, 1849), 8.

⁶⁰ Eddy, 428.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 414.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 429.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 427.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 429. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, article "Hosea Ballou." *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, article "Universalism."

⁶⁵ Eddy, 444.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 434.

⁶⁷ *Dictionary of American Biography*, article "Hosea Ballou."

⁶⁸ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, article "Universalism."

theory of universal salvation, this treatise was the first anti-Trinitarian book written and published in America " "Within ten years from the issue of the Treatise, there were but two Trinitarians in the Universalist ministry in America " " According to Eddy, Ballou expressed in his treatise his belief that the purpose of the atonement was "the reconciliation of man to God, and not the reconciliation of God to man"; that "while Christ labored and suffered for man, he did not suffer instead of man"; that the mission of Jesus was "the bringing of man into harmony with God, a moral and spiritual result produced in the sinner, who needs changing, [and] not a scheme or effort for changing the unchangeable God", and that "Christ reconciles man to God by his teachings, his example, his cross " "

The idea of imposed punishment was so obnoxious to Ballou that he opposed capital punishment," but he did not throw over all ideas of punishment His son wrote that "he held that God judges the human family in the earth; that every man must receive according to the sin he hath done, and that there is no respect of persons That all punishment is designed by the Divine Spirit for the reformation of the sinner, and consequently must take place where the sin is committed " He believed that punishment is according to "a law of necessity, and not a law of penalty A perpetuity of punishment must be connected with an equal continuance of sin, on the same principle that an effect is dependent upon its cause " "He believed in no more dreadful hell than is produced by the consequence of sin He taught that man must be saved from his sins, not from the punishment of them " " He conceived of sin and punishment as cause and

⁶⁹ Eddy, 434

⁷⁰ Adams, "Hosea Ballou and the Larger Hope", 285

⁷¹ Eddy, 436

⁷² M M Ballou, 190

⁷³ *Ibid*, 273-274

effect, and it would follow, as Benjamin Franklin said, that an act is not wrong because forbidden, but forbidden because it is wrong

When he was asked why it is that evil befalls the righteous, as well as the wicked, he replied with his beloved story of the selling of Joseph by his brethren into slavery in Egypt, including Joseph's later words "As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive" " He considered that "the cause which produced evil is good" For if we believe that evil caused evil "we thereby say that evil existed before it existed" "If we allow that evil had an origin or cause [and was not self-existent, which he would not admit], we must allow that the origin of evil is good" "

He conceived of salvation, not as a miraculous and instantaneous metamorphosis occurring at death, but as "the process of unfolding character"⁷⁴ which results from "discipline throughout . this life," "⁷⁵ which, in turn, comes from combatting evil and temptation A scrubwoman at an inn asked him, "Do you believe that all [mankind] will be saved without first becoming holy? Do you believe they will be saved just as they are?" He answered by asking, "Are you going to mop up the floor before it becomes perfectly clean? Are you going to mop it up just as it is?" "⁷⁶

He did not believe that fear of punishment could make a man good, and as a preacher he endeavored, according to his son, "to create regret in the hearer's heart at his own shortcoming, and to plant a contrite spirit there, rather than frighten them [sic] out of their [sic] senses" in the manner

⁷⁴ Quoted in *ibid* , 287

⁷⁵ Quoted in *ibid* , 361-362

⁷⁶ Adams, *Hosea Ballou and the Gospel Renaissance of the Nineteenth Century*, 19

⁷⁷ Adams, "Hosea Ballou and the Larger Hope," 295

⁷⁸ M M Ballou, 253-254

of Jonathan Edwards." "As well," he declared, "may we call a man honest who, having an inclination to steal, refrains for fear of the whip, as we may a man righteous, who, having vicious inclinations restrains them, and conforms to the exteriors of religion, for the purpose of escaping the flames of hell" Besides, "the eternal din of future punishment soon loses all effect in frightening the people, and has no influence but to impress a melancholy gloom on their minds"⁷⁹ But if I believe that God loves the world, "Shall I not love those objects which my God loves?" This is a consequence naturally to be expected from our belief No one who possesses the real sentiment, the real principle [of love], in his heart, can do otherwise than love all mankind And here you will easily perceive that all the commandments of the gospel are to be obeyed For when we love one another and love God, what duty is there that will be neglected? If this will not lead us to our duty, what will?"⁸⁰

He attacked the Calvinists who put on miserable faces "in hopes to merit heaven by making earth a hell,"⁸¹ who "affirmed God, and then described Him in terms which made Him a devil,"⁸² and who taught youth that "in this world there is more enjoyment in the ways of vice, iniquity, sin, and unrighteousness, than in the ways of obedience to the commands of God" To him, "there is in the way of strict morality, in the path of true religion, in the road of righteousness, all the rational enjoyment which our nature is capable of, and any departure from right is an equal departure from true happiness"⁸³ "The road to heaven is pleasant and delightful, if mankind will go the right way, and certainly God will bid

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 292

⁸⁰ Quoted in *ibid*, 266

⁸¹ Quoted in *ibid*, 271

⁸² Quoted in *ibid*, 273

⁸³ J C Adams, *Hosea Ballou and the Gospel Renaissance of the Nineteenth Century*, 8

⁸⁴ Quoted by M M Ballou, 23-24

the saint as sincere a welcome to the realms of immortal felicity who has in the journey of life tasted the temporal delights of innocence, as he will him who has abstained from them. Why, then, should we leave the path that is strewn with flowers and roses, for the purpose of going in another through a wilderness beset with thorns and briars, when both paths will terminate in the same happy country?"⁸⁵

Like Cotton Mather a hundred years before him, he was a Yankee in his utilitarian insistence that the happy life is the useful life, and a moralist in his concept of usefulness. In the preface to his "Treatise on the Atonement," he wrote, "I always find the greatest happiness [in rendering] myself useful to mankind,"⁸⁶ and perhaps he was only satisfying a greater desire when he refused to indulge his lifelong desire to visit Palestine because "what benefit could it ever be to my fellow-men?"⁸⁷ He wrote that his writings were primarily designed to be "useful to mankind,"⁸⁸ and he believed that "learning which makes us understand our every-day duty" is "of a better quality than that which only enables us to call things by different names, without giving us a knowledge of their natural qualities, either for good or evil."⁸⁹ As his son wrote in his biography of his father, "the importance and real value he attached to things were deduced from his estimate of their use."⁹⁰

He tested not only his writing but his preaching by its usefulness, declaring, "Brethren, I want a doctrine that I can prove by reducing it to practise, for we are enjoined to 'prove all things, and hold fast that which is good' The

⁸⁵ Quoted in *ibid*, 267

⁸⁶ Quoted in *ibid*, 83

⁸⁷ Quoted in *ibid*, 195

⁸⁸ Quoted in *ibid*, 83

⁸⁹ Quoted in *ibid*, 118

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 118

doctrine of Jesus is a practical one, and we can never do our duty in the family circle unless we live and conduct [sic] according to it " "

He loved the word "progress," " saw that truth is progressive, and kept an open mind Like Franklin and the Dunker, he wrote in the preface to his "Treatise on the Atonement," "I have often been solicited to write and publish my general views on the gospel, but have commonly observed to my friends that it might be attended with disagreeable consequences, as it is impossible to determine whether the ideas we entertain at the present time are agreeable to those which we shall be under the necessity of adopting after we have had more experience, and knowing, to my satisfaction, that authors are very apt to feel such an attachment to sentiments which have been openly avowed to the world, that their prejudice frequently obstructs their further acquisition in the knowledge of the truth, and even in cases of conviction their own self-importance will keep them from acknowledging their mistake " "

Rev Otis A Skinner, in a eulogy delivered soon after Ballou's death, said that he doubted "whether, in all the history of the church, an instance can be found in which a minister has had so high a rank in his sect, and yet manifested a less desire to bear rule" For "he believed that new discoveries were yet to be made, that progress was a law of the true church, and that measures must be suited to the times Hence, the most radical, those most desirous for reform, never felt that he stood in the way for there was not a reform which engaged the heart of the philanthropist that did not have his sanction He was a modern man, and lived in the present time [even at the age of four score], as much, almost,

⁹¹ Quoted in *ibid* , 221

⁹² *Ibid* , 84

⁹³ Quoted in *ibid* , 83

as the youngest in our ministry Let us go forward, was his motto " "

With John Robinson and Jonathan Edwards, Hosea Ballou declared in effect that "the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of His Holy Word " But Edwards put his new wine of philosophy in the old bottles of Calvinism—and burst the bottles Ballou performed the miracle of drawing the newer wine of Universalism from the older bottle, the Bible

⁹⁴ Quoted in *ibid* , 229-230

VII

JAMES FREEMAN PIONEER UNITARIAN

1

WHEN, IN 1785, King's Chapel in Boston chose to follow the heresy of its pastor, James Freeman, it was said that "the first Episcopal church in New England became the first Unitarian church in the New World"¹

This was not the first instance of Unitarianism in America, but it was the first time that an ecclesiastical organization accepted it officially and as a body. Even before "the first Unitarian chapel [in England], distinctly known as such, was founded in Essex street, London, by Theophilus Lindsey, in 1774,"² Dr Ebenezer Gay of Hingham, Massachusetts, during his seventy years pastorate (1717-1787) earned the title of "father of American Unitarianism." Rev Lemuel Briant, minister at Braintree from 1747 to 1752, was a Unitarian, according to his Unitarian parishioner, President John Adams.³ Charles Chauncy, for sixty years minister of the First Church in Boston until his death in 1787, was a Unitarian.⁴ Jonathan Mayhew, minister of the West Church from 1747 to 1766, has been called "the first clergyman in New England who expressly and openly opposed the school doctrine of the Trinity."⁵ An orthodox contemporary com-

¹ Eliot, Samuel A., *Heralds of a Liberal Faith* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1910), II, 5.

² Allen, Joseph H., *Historical Sketch of the Unitarian Movement Since the Reformation* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1894), 149.

³ *Ibid.*, 175-178; Koch, G. Adolph, *Republican Religion* (New York: Henry Holt, 1933), 191-215.

plained in Boston that "the divinity of Christ is an antiquated doctrine, very unfashionable and unmodish" ⁴ "It might almost be said," wrote Professor Joseph H. Allen of Harvard, in his "Historical Sketch of the Unitarian Movement Since the Reformation," "that every man of very wide and strong influence in public life was a confirmed disbeliever in the Trinity" ⁵ Even the clergy as a class were susceptible to rationalism, and at the end of the eighteenth century, it was said, there "was not a strict Trinitarian clergyman of the Congregational order in Boston" ⁶

Salem was an early pioneer in religious liberalism. Roger Williams had found it so at the beginning, and its fanatical witchcraft craze at the end of the seventeenth century may have provoked a special reaction toward skepticism and liberalism there—just as later the reaction to the "Great Awakening" brought rationalism into religion throughout the country. Moreover, Salem's international contacts through its shipping industry had early made this town as well as others in New England tend to be religiously eclectic. Allen quoted with approval, but without acknowledgment of its source, the statement that "the first liberalizing influence upon the old Puritan theology was felt . . . through its navigators even more than through its critics and theologians. In the place of the narrow traditions they carried out with them they brought home the germs of a broad religion of humanity" ⁷ Just after the Revolution the estimate was made that twenty out of the twenty-four most prominent Salem ship-masters, who in turn were the leaders of the town, were to be found in Unitarian congregations.

At about this same time, and just a few years before Freeman began to preach at King's Chapel, Salem harbored an exceptional array of liberal clergymen. There was Dr

⁴ Allen, 175-181

⁷ *Ibid.*, 184-185. Koch, 210-213

Thomas Barnard, minister of the North Church for nearly forty years (1773-1812), John Prince, minister for fifty-seven years (1779-1836) of the First Church, and William Bentley, minister for thirty-six years (1783-1819) of the East Church Bentley, who was said to have been "expert in at least twenty-one languages" and who was so "adept in calligraphy that manuscript copies made by him in Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic, are models of that elegant art," "sympathized frankly with the English Unitarians," holding the religious tracts of the Unitarian philosopher and scientist, Joseph Priestley, to be "a sufficient vindication of their doctrine" "He was among the first to accept the later Unitarian expositions of the Logos, and was earlier than Channing to oppose the orthodox dogma of native depravity in human nature" "

A third cause of religious liberalism, in addition to the "Great Awakening" and international contacts through shipping, lay in what we might term international fellowship in the Revolution Timothy Pickering, one of the most noted Salemites in history, recorded that when he "heard Baron Steuben say, while campaigning on the Hudson, that he 'would as soon believe the doctrine of the Trinity' as some tale [i e , yarn] that had just been told him," his own liberalism was inaugurated " James Truslow Adams generalized on this point in his recent history entitled "Provincial Society 1690-1763 " " Deism already flourished in England, France and Germany, and the soldiery from these countries which contended in the Revolution, whether allies or enemies, exerted an influence upon American society in this and other directions " In New York, for instance, drama was encouraged by

⁵ Allen, 182-184

⁶ *Ibid* , 181

⁷ Adams, 315

⁸ Elsbree, Oliver Wendell, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America, 1790-1815* (Williamsport, Pa Williamsport Printing & Publishing Co , 1928), 26

the patronage of British officers " These three forces, which happened to be exemplified in Salem, all led toward the marked religious liberalism of the Revolutionary period

2

It is interesting and significant that Freeman seems to have done the first preaching of his career in 1782 in the liberal Salem pulpit of his Harvard classmate, William Bentley

Born in 1759, of a family descended from an original settler of Watertown in 1630, Freeman was graduated from Harvard in 1777, passed a year there as a graduate student and continued reading theology thereafter ⁹ He preached in Bentley's pulpit while on his return from an eventful mission to Quebec, where his father was located, when his ship was seized by the British, only to be captured by an American privateer and taken into Salem Up to this time, his only other significant activities had been teaching school at Barnstable and drilling a company of Cape Cod troops for the Continental Army His preaching at Salem marked the beginning of his career

A few weeks later, Dr Thomas Bulfinch, senior warden of King's Chapel in Boston and father of the eminent architect, Charles Bulfinch, conducted negotiations with Freeman which ended with his arrival at the Chapel as "reader" In the following spring he was chosen pastor He was active in his duties for forty-five years, and was remunerated by the congregation for fifty-three years until his death in 1835 at the age of seventy-six

The course of his ministry did not begin smoothly King's Chapel was Anglican, but the Revolution had severed eccle-

⁹ Dickinson, Thomas H., *Making of American Literature* (New York Century, 1932), 252

¹⁰ Foote, Henry Wilder, *Annals of King's Chapel* (Boston American Unitarian Association, 1910), 378

siastical as well as political connections with England. There were difficulties about the consecration of American bishops and no wide Episcopal organization existed, but had it not been for difficulties of dogma, Freeman could have been ordained by either Bishop Samuel Seabury of Connecticut or the new Bishop Provost of New York.

Like many other Episcopal churchmen, both clerical and lay, almost simultaneously with his election as minister, Freeman "began to feel serious doubts with reference to the Trinity" ¹¹ An English Unitarian minister visiting in Boston, Rev William Hazlitt, father of the famous English romantic critic who was with his father at this time in Boston, "doubtless had a considerable influence" on this decision ¹² Other Anglican clergymen rationalized their inconsistencies. Freeman wrote that an English rector with Unitarian opinions remarked that "an historic Church has a right to have its past beliefs recognized in its worship" ¹³ A Salem rector said of the Athanasian (Trinitarian) Creed, "I read it, as if I did not believe it." Another New England clergyman announced, "I am directed to read this, which is said to have been the creed of St Athanasius, but God forbid that it should be yours or mine." Still another churchman "set it [the creed] to a hunting tune and sang it" ¹⁴

Freeman refused to straddle on the dogma of the Trinity. He "ceased to read such portion of the liturgy as recognized this dogma, and proposed to the congregation an amended form of public prayer." He at the same time preached a series of sermons on Christian doctrine, presenting in the most explicit form of statement the belief which he had reached, in the confident expectation that his opinions

¹¹ *Ibid*, 380

¹² Foote, Henry Wilder, *James Freeman and King's Chapel, 1732-1787* (Boston: Leonard C. Bowles, 1873), 9-10

¹³ Foote, *Annals*, 371

¹⁴ Foote, *James Freeman and King's Chapel*, 9-10

would result in his immediate dismissal But Unitarianism was in the air " " The congregation supported him, the revised liturgy by the Rev Samuel Clarke—which was used by Lindsey in London and "excluded all Trinitarian phraseology"—was in substance adopted," and King's Chapel officially inaugurated Unitarianism in America

The wardens of the Chapel petitioned Bishop Seabury to ordain their minister, "probably with little or no hope of a favorable answer, as he was not only a high churchman, but a half-pay ex-chaplain in the British army,"" but the bishop invited Freeman to come to Connecticut for examination by the Episcopal Convention there Bishop Samuel Seabury was an ancestor of Judge Samuel Seabury, the prosecutor who a few years ago ousted the Mayor of New York City in a monumental investigation, and the bishop showed himself a thorough inquisitor

When Freeman refused to subscribe to the parts of the Book of Common Prayer addressed to the Trinity, the Convention asked him to cite Biblical texts for his heresy He recorded his reply soon afterwards in a letter to his father, quoted in Henry Wilder Foote's "Annals of King's Chapel" " 'It would ill become me, gentlemen, to dispute with persons of your learning and abilities But if you will give me leave, I will repeat two passages which seem to me decisive "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus —There is but one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ" In both these passages Jesus Christ is plainly distinguished from God, and in the last, God is expressly declared to be the Father' To this they made no other reply than an 'Ah,' which echoed round the room 'But are not all the attributes of the Father,' said one, 'attributed to the Son in the Scriptures' Is not omnipotence, for in-

¹⁵ Foote, *Annals*, 380

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 371, 391

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 384

stance?" 'It is true,' I answered, 'that our Savior says of Himself, "All power is given unto me in Heaven and Earth" You will please to observe here that the power is said to be "given" It is a derived power It is not self-existent and unoriginated, like that of the Father' 'But is not the Son omniscient? Does He not know the hearts of men?' 'Yes, He knows them by virtue of that intelligence which he derives from the Father, but by a like communication did Peter know the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira' After some more conversation of the same kind, they told me that it could not possibly be that the Christian world should have been idolaters for seventeen hundred years In answer to this, I said that whether they had been idolaters or not I would not determine, but that it was fully as probable that they should be idolaters for seventeen hundred years as that they should be Roman Catholics for twelve hundred "¹⁸

When ordination was refused him in Connecticut, he applied to Bishop-elect Provoost of New York Although this bishop expressed his approval of the King's Chapel liturgy, he felt forced to withhold his decision until the General Convention should meet at some time in the future In the letter to his father which has just been quoted, Freeman declared,

" I am fully convinced that he who has devoted his time to the study of divinity, and can find a congregation who are willing to hear him, is, to all intents, a minister of the gospel "¹⁹ He had already written to his father on a previous occasion that "the bishops, in my opinion, are a useless, and in this country they would be a pernicious, order of men I like the liturgy of the Church of England, but am fond of independent [Congregational] form of ecclesiastical government The New England [Congregational] churches are upon the best establishment in the world . In entering into

¹⁸ *Ibid* , 384-385

¹⁹ Quoted by Foote, *James Freeman and King's Chapel*, 18

the Church of England, I had no design to adopt all their tenets. Some of them, I believe to be absurd. The idea, in particular, of an uninterrupted succession of bishops from the apostles to the present day, is extravagant and ridiculous." ²⁰ Foote wrote that while he still desired and hoped for regular ordination, he began to believe that "all that was essential to constitute ordination is the solemn ratification of the choice of the people in such mode as may be most expedient and edifying." On mature deliberation, the congregation learned a trick from its Congregationalist neighbors and agreed with Freeman. ²¹ In 1787, in the fifth year of his ministration in the Chapel, he was ordained, he served the congregation forty years longer. His friend, William Bentley, wrote in his diary that news of the ordination "raised me into a transport." ²²

King's Chapel continued to consider itself within the Episcopal fellowship, but the die was cast. It had become the first Unitarian church in America. When critics carped, the wardens of the Chapel published their creed. "We hereby declare that we worship and adore one only living and true God, the parent of mankind, the bountiful giver of all good, that we offer our adorations to him in the name of his dearly beloved Son, the Redeemer of mankind, and that we expect and hope for pardon and acceptance and eternal happiness only through the mercies of God in Jesus Christ." ²³

3

But they did not adopt what is now considered Unitarianism. Freeman placed Jesus in a somewhat intermediate position between God on the one hand, and man on the other. As

²⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 9

²¹ Foote, *Annals*, 386-387

²² Bentley, *Diary, 1784-1819* (Salem, Massachusetts: Essex Institute, 1905-1914, 4 vols.), I, 80

²³ Quoted in Foote, *Annals*, 393

Koch wrote in his recent valuable book entitled, "Republican Religion," for Freeman, Jesus "was not simply a man. He referred to him as our Savior, Redeemer, Lord, and as one who, by his life, death and resurrection had reconciled us with God. [Jesus to him] is the model to be held up whenever the perfect man is described, the fullest realization of human potentiality" ²⁴ As Professor Henry Wilder Foote of Harvard wrote, "He evidently recognized in Christ all the divine that could be made human" ²⁵ In this sense of the word "divine" he believed in the divinity of Jesus. He made the distinction, which is still made by many Unitarians, between the divinity and the deity of Jesus. Mankind is conceived as having a spark of the divine, Jesus as having a divine flame. He becomes a kind of big brother of us all, being nearer to God, having more of the divine, being superior in degree, but not in kind, to other men.

Moderation, as in his opinion regarding the deity of Jesus, was a prime quality in Freeman. In spite of his slur on Roman Catholicism in his tilt with the Connecticut clergy, he was so amiable toward Roman Catholics as to have cherished a friendship with Bishop Cheverus of Boston. At the same time, his step-grandson, Rev. James Freeman Clarke, wrote that when someone lamented the vociferousness of an atheist, he replied that infidelity was valuable in that it stimulated defense of religion ²⁶ He remarked with aversion, "I have a neighbor who comes and entertains me [by] abusing the orthodox by the hour, and all the time boasting of his liberality." "Stearns complains of the cant of criticism. I think the cant of liberality worse than that." ²⁷ He was endowed with an innate tact and tolerance in his dealings with

²⁴ Koch, 207

²⁵ Foote, *Annals*, 394

²⁶ Clarke, James Freeman, *Memorial and Biographical Sketches* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1878), 86

²⁷ Quoted by Foote, *Annals*, 395

his neighbors, and in 1788 he wrote to his father, "I have only one purpose more to accomplish, which is to exchange [pulpits] with the Congregational ministers in town I joined their association several years ago, which is a leading step

My wish is to destroy the party distinctions which exist between churchmen and dissenters, as they are called, though there are no dissenters in this country " ²⁸ This was written when he still considered himself within the Episcopal Church

With his genial attitude and liberal principles, he grew old gracefully Wrote his step-grandson, "He carried his freedom of mind into matters of taste as well as matters of opinion" Bred in the neo-classical tradition of Addison and Pope, "but finding that many young persons were interested in Wordsworth and Coleridge, he patiently read these authors " ²⁹ In 1792 he was a member of the first Boston School Committee, he was a founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society; he was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences In 1811 he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from Harvard His portrait was painted by Gilbert Stuart, and a bust executed by Shobal Vail Clevenger was placed in King's Chapel, with a noble inscription ending, "In theological attainments there were few, and in the qualities which endear a minister to his people, there were none, to surpass him " ³⁰

²⁸ Quoted in Foote, *James Freeman and King's Chapel*, 26

²⁹ Clarke, 84-85

³⁰ Foote, *Annals*, 406

VIII

THOMAS PAINE CITIZEN OF THE UNIVERSE

1

IT is two hundred years since Thomas Paine was born, but he is still, as he was during the later years of his life, both famous and infamous. He is justly famous for the significant part which he played in both the American and French Revolutions, and he is unjustly infamous for the part which he played in the religious revolution in the age of reason. By "The Age of Reason" should be meant not only his brilliant religious tract with this title, but the whole rationalistic and deistic movement of the eighteenth century which culminated in America in Universalism and Unitarianism.

It is highly ironical that this Deistic tract, which he wrote with the expressed purpose of restraining the French Revolutionists from atheism,¹ caused him to be labelled an atheist, and it is equally ironical that no man has been more maligned by his enemies than was Paine by those who should have been his friends and admirers.

It was to be expected that such a partisan newspaper as "The Republican, or Anti-Democrat" of Baltimore should seize upon Democratic President Thomas Jefferson's reception of Paine, upon his return to America in 1802, to hail Paine as "Thou lilly-livered sinical rogue, thou gibbet inheriting slave, thou art nought but the composition of a knave, beggar,

¹ Paine, Thomas, *Writings* (ed. Moncure D. Conway, New York: G. P. Putnam, 1894, 4 vols.) IV, 205.

coward, pander, and the son and heir of some drunken she-devil " " It was conceivable that one of his contemporaries like his orthodox Christian biographer, James Cheetham, who wrote his biography of Paine as "a pass-port to British Treasury favor," hoping "to sell a dead man's good name for a price,"² termed himself unprejudiced³ and then declared Paine destitute of all human virtues⁴ It is not surprising that in 1820, when Paine had been dead more than a decade, the English fanatic, John S Harford, wrote a biography of Paine in which he extolled Cheetham's volume and repeated that Paine had no virtues⁵ It is amusing that a Roman Catholic bishop, in 1844, published in the *Catholic Magazine* a fabricated account of Paine's dying moments,⁶ and that as late as 1879 a ranter approved an earlier sermon in which "with abundant facts, such as would convince a court, it is shown conclusively that Thomas Paine was vicious and corrupt in life, and miserable and remorseful in death"⁷ The "abundant facts, such as would convince a court," had long before convinced a court that Cheetham and his ilk were hars guilty of libeling Paine⁸

All that was to be expected But it is disappointing that the Universalist ex-Surgeon-General of the Continental Army, Dr Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, wrote that Paine's principles avowed in his "Age of Reason" were "so offensive to

² Quoted by Koch, G Adolph, *Republican Religion* (New York Holt, 1933), 133 November 26, 1802

³ Best, Mary A, *Thomas Paine* (New York Harcourt, Brace, 1927), 395

⁴ Cheetham, James, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (New York Southwick and Pelsue, 1809), xxiii

⁵ *Ibid*, 313-314

⁶ Harford, John S, *Some Account of the Life of Thomas Paine* (Bristol, England J M Gutch, 1820), 63

⁷ Best, 398

⁸ Crofts, W F, and Chaplain McCabe, *Ten Points of Ingersollville* (Chicago Rhodes and McClure, 1879), 38-39

⁹ Best, 396-397

me that I did not wish to renew my intercourse with him " " It is disappointing that the Rev William Bentley of Salem, who was noted for his religious liberalism and intellectual hospitality, termed "The Age of Reason" "a scandalous insult upon all the institutions of religion " " However, he later recognized our "great obligations to [Paine] in the American revolution" and hoped that "posterity will do justice to his talents, to his services, and to his character, should it be denied in the present generation " Moreover, he perceived that Paine denounced "what might be renounced without injury to morality, to the reverence of God and the peace of the mind " "

It is disappointing to find that a son of a Unitarian signer of the Declaration of Independence, Robert Treat Paine, had his name changed in 1801 from Thomas to R T Paine, Jr , through hatred of the more famous Thomas " It is distressing to find that the Unitarian President, John Adams, wrote to his friend, Professor Benjamin Waterhouse of Harvard in 1805 regarding Paine, that "such a mongrel between pig and puppy, begotten by a wild boar on a bitch wolf, never before in any age of the world was suffered by the poltroonery of mankind to run through such a career of mischief " "

It is surprising to find the liberal Unitarian minister, Theodore Parker, writing as late as 1843 that "with what I understand to be the spirit of [Paine's] writings on theology and religion, I have not the smallest sympathy " " Yet Parker

¹⁰ Conway, Moncure D, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (New York G P Putnam's Sons, 1892-1893), II, 318

¹¹ *Diary, 1734-1819* (Salem, Massachusetts Essex Institute, 1905-1914 4 vols), II, 107 (September 19, 1794)

¹² *Ibid* , III, 441 (June 18, 1809)

¹³ Adams, Henry, *History of U S* (New York Boni, 1930), I 330

¹⁴ Ford, Worthington C , editor, *Statesman and Friend Correspondence of John Adams with Benjamin Waterhouse, 1784-1822* (Boston Little, Brown, 1927), 31

¹⁵ Quoted by Frothingham, Octavius Brooks, *Theodore Parker* (New York G P Putnam, 1886), 179

almost repeated Paine, word for word, when he wrote that "to my thinking" there is "but one religion,— being good and doing good " " It is almost unbelievable that the historian and later president, Theodore Roosevelt, in his biography of Gouverneur Morris in 1896 termed Paine "a filthy little atheist," and let the statement stand in later editions of the volume * Perhaps the most judicious concise criticism of Paine is that of the agnostic, Robert G Ingersoll, written about the time when Roosevelt wrote his attack Ingersoll wrote that Paine had "more brains than books; more sense than education, more courage than politeness; more strength than polish " † This is the worst that can truthfully be said against him

It was Paine's manner of attack rather than his matter which made him so unpopular with men like Rush, Bentley, R T Paine, and others John Adams gave the key to others' as well as his own abuse of Paine when, in 1811, he wrote to Professor Waterhouse regarding a clergyman, "Though I may not agree with my friend in all his sentiments, yet, as he has as clear a right to his own opinions as I have to mine, I have no right to censure them, since he has delivered them with decorum " " There was the rub, Paine did not deliver his opinions "with decorum " Yet a century before he committed his unforgiven sin of writing his violent attack on orthodox Christianity, the great English poet, John Dryden, wrote in his "Preface to Fables, Ancient and Modern," that "the good cannot be too much honored, nor the bad too coarsely used." " To Paine, orthodoxy was "bad", to put it mildly Forty years

¹⁶ Quoted by Chadwick, John White, *Theodore Parker Preacher and Reformer* (Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1900), 137

* Roosevelt, Theodore, *Gouverneur Morris* (Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1896), 289 *Works* (National Edition New York Scribner, 1926), VII, 421

† Ingersoll, Robert G, *Works* (edited by C P Farrell New York C P Farrell, 1900), I, 122

¹⁷ *Statesman and Friend*, 73-74

¹⁸ Dryden, John, *Poetical Works* (Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1900), 745

before he wrote "The Age of Reason," the liberal Jonathan Mayhew of the West Church of Boston, declared in a published sermon, "Nor should they think that nonsense and contradictions can ever be too sacred to be ridiculous" ¹⁹ Paine ridiculed what he considered nonsensical and ridiculous. A recent church historian wrote of Mayhew that he practised as he preached, not scrupling "even to ridicule [the doctrine of the Trinity], by applying the phrases of the creed to an imaginary deification of the Virgin Mary" ²⁰ Paine did nothing more shocking than this. Theodore Parker, who had "not the smallest sympathy" with what he understood to be "the spirit of his writings," endorsed Paine's methods when he wrote, "But how ought things to be treated? Light things lightly, grave things gravely, ridiculous things ridiculously" ²¹ He practiced as he preached, and once referred to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as "grocer's wine and baker's bread" ²² Paine could scarcely have done more than that.

Like Jonathan Swift, who is said to have flogged a cruel cab-driver with his own whip, Paine reacted violently to violence, ridiculously to the ridiculous, bitterly to bitterness. He wrote to his fellow religious liberal, Elihu Palmer, that "it is necessary to be bold. Some people can be reasoned into sense, and others must be shocked into it. Say a bold thing that will stagger them and they will begin to think" ²³ He wrote another time, "If I have anywhere expressed myself overwarmly, 'tis from a fixed, immovable hatred I have, and ever had, to cruel men and cruel measures" ²⁴ His Quaker dislike of slavery led him to express Calvinistic and very un-Quaker-like sentiments when he wrote to Jefferson that "it is chiefly

¹⁹ Quoted by Koch, 199-200

²⁰ Allen, 178

²¹ Quoted by Frothingham, 100

²² Quoted by Addison, Daniel Dulany, *The Clergy in American Life and Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1900), 239

²³ Quoted by Best, 308

²⁴ Quoted in *ibid*, 129

the people of Liverpool that employ themselves in the slave trade . Had I command of the elements I would blast Liverpool with fire and brimstone It is the Sodom and Gomorrah of brutality " "

He was not a reflective philosopher, but a forceful journalist Wrote Parrington, "He was probably the greatest pamphleteer that the English race has produced, and one of its greatest idealists " " In the fact that he was not a professional philosopher, or at least not an educated and cultured one, lay part of his fault in the eyes of the intelligentsia, his strength in the eyes of the liberal man in the street The great English essayist and critic, William Hazlitt, son of a Unitarian pioneer, wrote in 1823 in his essay entitled "My First Acquaintance with Poets," that the great English romantic poet and liberal preacher, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, drew a parallel between Bishop Berkeley and Paine "He said that the one was an instance of a subtle, the other of an acute mind, than which no two things could be more distinct The one was a shop-boy's quality, the other the characteristic of a philosopher " "

A social as well as an intellectual difference is implied here, and this point is brought out by Koch in his volume entitled "Republican Religion" Wrote Koch, the difference between reformers like the patriot and liberal, Ethan Allen, Thomas Paine and Elihu Palmer, on the one hand, and Joseph Priestley and "the New England Congregational Unitarians on the other, was primarily the social difference between liberalism and radicalism Roughly, they agreed in theory, and all alike had been influenced by the rationalism and naturalism of the Age of Enlightenment They were all at least

²⁵ Quoted in *ibid* , 381

²⁶ Parrington, Vernon Louis, *The Colonial Mind, 1620-1800 (Main Currents in American Thought, I* New York Harcourt, Brace, 1927), 341

²⁷ *Twenty-two Essays of William Hazlitt* (ed Arthur Beatty Boston D C Heath, 1918), 9-10

tinged with deism . . . [But] it is one thing to discuss deism and political philosophy in the drawing room" and another to "incite the masses to forget their place in the social body " "

Koch overestimated the liberalism of the "New England Congregational Unitarians " Part of Paine's significance for religious liberalism lies in the fact that he was more liberal than even the heretical clergy Twenty-five years after he wrote "The Age of Reason," such a liberal as the Unitarian minister, William Ellery Channing, like Cotton Mather, was still a rationalist in theory rather than in practice But no doubt most of Paine's value lies in the fact that he turned philosophical rationalism and deism into plain common sense He was not original in his principles, but he alone made these principles popular In doing that, he entitled himself to a position of special prominence in the history of the development of popular religious liberalism in America

2

One of the few facts about Paine's life on which none of his biographers place uncomplimentary interpretations, is that he was born in Thetford, Norfolk county, England, on January 29, 1737 Almost everything else about him, from the allegation that he "falsified" his name by adding an "e" to it²⁸ to the accusations that he was foul and drunken habitually,²⁹ died weakly recanting his "atheism,"³⁰ and even that his appearance was evil,³¹ has been subject to distortion or fabrication

His father was a Quaker, his mother an Anglican The sanctimonious sourness of an Anglican aunt early turned him

²⁸ Koch, 185

²⁹ Chalmers, George ("Francis Oldys"), *The Life of Thomas Paine with a Defense of his Writings* (London: John Stockdale, 1791) 3

³⁰ Cheetham, 314 ff

³¹ Harford, 59-60

³² Chalmers, 5

against institutional religion, but he always respected the Quakers and almost considered himself one of them.³³ After brief schooling, cut short by poverty, he tried his father's trade of making stays for corsets. Later, he became an excise-man or tax-collector. He was twice dismissed from this position under rather vague circumstances. Parrington wrote that he probably was removed "for what today would be called unionizing activity."³⁴

In any case, he held no love for the British government and acted on the suggestion of Benjamin Franklin, whom he met in London, that he go to America. He arrived in Philadelphia in 1774 with letters of introduction from Franklin, took up journalism, proposed American independence, helped rouse the colonies to revolt, helped win the Revolution, paid England a visit in the hope of instigating an uprising there, and went to France to help with its revolution. Too moderate for the French radicals, he was eventually imprisoned, ignored by the aristocratic and unsympathetic American minister, Gouverneur Morris, and rescued by French moderates and the new liberal American minister, James Monroe. He returned to America on a government vessel in 1802 at the invitation of President Jefferson. He died in New York, in 1809.

He had little formal education, but his mind was remarkably keen and vigorous. It is unlikely that he had made much of a study of political or theological theories, but his keen mind seems to have become aware of many of them through attack upon, and references to them. His susceptibility to suggestion of a thoughtful nature is illustrated by an incident recorded by him. An acquaintance in his early days happened to remark that Frederick of Prussia was a jolly good fellow and made a fine king because he had so much of the devil in him. Paine thought at once that if a good king

³³ Best, 129-131

³⁴ Parrington, I, 328

must have some of the devil in him the world ought to do without kings " In his writings Paine refers to many of the great philosophers of the past, but even a slight and superficial knowledge of them could influence his keen and receptive mind To him, this, no doubt, seemed sufficient, educated by practical experience, he would have scorned the idea that books could hold subtle and involved thought which cannot be comprehended at a glance or through second-hand acquaintance His own writing showed this He simplified and clarified to the limit, and what he could not simplify seemed to him unnecessary pedantry

In appearance, Paine was said by his biographer, W T Sherwin, to have been somewhat "above the middle size, being about five feet ten inches, and rather athletic " " But Roosevelt called him "little " His biographer, T C Rickman, added, "His eye, of which the painter could not convey the exquisite meaning, was full, brilliant, and singularly piercing, it had in it 'the muse of fire ' " " His best biographer, Moncure D Conway, quoted Charles Lee as calling him "the man who had genius in his eyes " " And yet his biographer Chalmers asserted in his vicious biography that he "always appeared to female eyes a dozen years older than he was, owing to the hardness of his features, or to the scars of disease " But even Chalmers admitted that he married twice "

He was declared by his friends to have been a loyal friend and pleasant gentleman " Washington, Jefferson, Monroe, Franklin, and many others in America, England and

³⁵ Quoted by Vale, George, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (Boston Boston Investigator Office, 1863), 26

³⁶ Sherwin, W T, *Memours of the Life of Thomas Paine* (London, 1819), 230

³⁷ Rickman, Thomas Clio, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (London, 1819), xv

³⁸ Conway, II, 473

³⁹ Chalmers, 5, 6, 9

⁴⁰ Conway, II, 575

France, were warmly attached to him personally as well as politically " His magnanimity to a personal adversary, " his sportsmanlike attitude toward a bitter political opponent, " his humane stand against the execution of Louis XVI, " are all revealed by his most reliable biographers His physical courage under fire as a soldier in the American Revolution is attested, " and his physical and moral courage in opposing the execution of Louis is dramatized by all but his abusers "

He was not obnoxious in his personal habits, according to the most reliable authorities Wrote Ellery Sedgwick in his biography of Paine published in 1899, "The stories of his filthy habits are slander " If he became drunk, it was "a very unusual indulgence " " Wrote his biographer Vale, in 1863, "Being penurious to a limited extent, in his old age, and in sickness being sometimes peevish and angry, these are all the personal blemishes we can discover " " Moncure D Conway, Universalist minister and most authoritative biographer of Paine, wrote in 1892 that, "instead of being looked on as an atheist and a drunkard, Paine ought to be viewed as a philosopher and a truly benevolent man " "

But so far from being considered a philosopher, he was not even considered an American citizen by the election officials of New Rochelle After his return from France in 1802 he was never permitted to vote⁵⁰ So far from being considered a truly benevolent man, even the Quakers did not

⁴¹ Sedgwick, Ellery, *Thomas Paine* (Boston Small, Maynard, 1899), 46, 109, 128, 10, 31, 62, 63, 80

⁴² *Ibid*, 90-91 Vale, 112-113

⁴³ Vale, 114

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 113 Sedgwick, 89

⁴⁵ Sedgwick, 30-31

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p 89 Vale, 112

⁴⁷ Sedgwick, 145

⁴⁸ Vale, 5

⁴⁹ Conway, II, 456

⁵⁰ Best, 387

permit him to be buried in their cemetery! " His old enemy, but posthumous convert, William Cobbett, disinterred his body from its grave on his farm at New Rochelle and took it to England for a sumptuous funeral and burial. Bankruptcy balked the proceedings, and Paine's body is somewhere in England. No one seems to know where. " Paine's history demonstrated that in becoming "a citizen of the world," as he truthfully called himself, one also may become "a man without a country " "

The fate of his body was in keeping with his troubled life, and might amuse him. He refused to worry about death and was not impatient about the hereafter. He once wrote to Samuel Adams, the Boston patriot, "I have been preserved through many dangers, but instead of buffeting the Deity with prayers, as if I distrusted him, or must dictate to him, I repose myself on his protection, and you, my friend, will find, even in your last moments, more consolation in the silence of resignation than in the murmuring wish of a prayer " ⁵¹ He wrote elsewhere, "The man who puts his trust and confidence in God, that leads a just and moral life, and endeavors to do good, does not trouble himself about priests when his hour for departure comes, nor permit priests to trouble themselves about him " ⁵² He was as good as his word, and among his last words were these. "I have lived an honest and useful life to mankind, my time has been spent in doing good, and I die in perfect composure and resignation to the will of my Creator God " ⁵³

3

The unpopularity of Paine is the more astonishing because, soon after his arrival in Philadelphia on November 30,

⁵¹ Conway, II, 418

⁵² Best, 400-401

⁵³ Quoted in *ibid*, 389-390. *Writings*, IV, 208, 338

1774, he took up journalism and within a year proved his aggressive Americanism by writing in favor of independence. Controversy still rages over whether he was the first publicly to propose independence,⁵⁴ but it is generally agreed that he was at least one of the first. In October, 1775, he wrote in the *Pennsylvania Journal*, "When I reflect on [British tyranny and cruelty] I hesitate not for a moment to believe that the Almighty will finally separate America from Britain. Call it independence or what you will." "

His early advocacy of independence is the more surprising when we consider that he anticipated our later isolationist policy, when he warned against even a "partial connection" with any part of Europe.⁵⁵ Moreover, in advocating independence he immediately had in mind, not merely one colony or even the thirteen colonies, but the whole continent. He wrote that independence was "not the affair of a city, a county, a province or a kingdom, but of a continent—of at least one-eighth of the habitable globe." † He urged that the colonies should establish a federal union, always "remembering that our strength is continental, not provincial." ‡ Further, he appreciated the cosmopolitan nature of the colonial population, refusing to "admit the title of parent country to England, because if it is due anywhere it is due to Europe collectively, and the first settlers from England were driven here by persecution." "

In January, 1776, he published his pamphlet, "Common Sense," of which 120,000 copies were sold within three months. In it, he attacked "the royal brute of Britain" and urged separation from England. John Adams wrote that this pamphlet "crystallized public opinion, and was the first

⁵⁴ *New York Times*, Nov 18, Dec 2, 1934

⁵⁵ Paine, *Writings* (ed Moncure D Conway New York G P Putnam, 1894 4 vols), I, 65-66

⁵⁶ *Ibid* , I, 88-89

† *Ibid* , I, 84

⁵⁷ *Ibid* , I, 289

factor in bringing about the Revolution " ⁵⁸ In 1805, he wrote to Professor Waterhouse, "I know not whether any man in the world has had more influence on its inhabitants or affairs for the last thirty years than Tom Paine " ⁵⁹

In November, 1776, he resigned the editorship of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, served in the ranks as a soldier under Washington, and began to write his famous series of sixteen pamphlets entitled "The Crisis," which did much to maintain the morale of the country throughout the Revolution. Washington is said to have ordered some of them read to the army at Valley Forge ⁶⁰ Later, Washington wrote to the Pennsylvania Assembly, which consequently voted Paine an expression of gratitude to the extent of five hundred pounds sterling "So important were his services during the [Revolution], that those persons whose own merits in the course of it have been most distinguished concur with a highly honorable unanimity in entertaining sentiments of esteem for him . . . " ⁶¹

Despite Paine's aggressiveness, he was enough of a Quaker to be also something of a pacifist. He wrote that all war except defensive war is "inglorious and detestable," but he believed that defensive war is a duty ⁶² To curb war, he advocated limitation of armaments, but not the laying down of arms ⁶³ He wrote, "The balance of power is the scale of peace. The same balance would be preserved were all destitute of arms . . . , but since some will not, others dare not lay them aside " ⁶⁴

In addition to wielding both the pen and the sword in the cause of revolution, he also served as secretary to the Con-

⁵⁸ Quoted by Best, 74

⁵⁹ *Statesman and Friend*, 31

⁶⁰ Best, 104

⁶¹ Quoted by Best, 213

⁶² *Writings*, I, 277

⁶³ *Ibid*, II, 70

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, I, 56

gressional Committee on Foreign Affairs. He aided in making arrangements for financing the army, and in the course of doing this he participated in founding the Bank of North America.⁶⁵ He went with Colonel Laurens on a successful mission to secure financial aid from France, proposed the establishment of a "saltpeter association" for supplying the public magazines with gunpowder, and served as clerk to the Pennsylvania Assembly.⁶⁶

Although he threw himself into the Revolution with zest and urged the formation of a democratic federal government, his opinion of democratic government was not consistently favorable. Even before he proposed independence, he wrote that "the wisest assemblies of men are as liable as individuals to corruption and error. The greatest ravages which have ever been committed on the happiness of mankind have been committed by weak and corrupted republics."⁶⁷ Much later, when he was to be tried in England for blasphemy, he ridiculed the idea that ordinary citizens can decide matters of conscience.⁶⁸ He seems to have forgotten that all questions in a democracy are supposed to be decided by the people. In 1804, when the people of Louisiana, largely French, petitioned Congress for self-government, he recalled the French Revolution and wrote them a public letter in which he said that since they were unaccustomed to self-rule they should work into it gradually.⁶⁹ This letter is reminiscent of Rousseau's "Considerations on the Government of Poland," written when he was old and had become somewhat conservative.

His letter to the French in Louisiana suggests that Paine had been disillusioned by the French Revolution. But at

⁶⁵ Conway, I, 151-152

⁶⁶ *Writings*, I, 1-3

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 11

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 228-229

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 431

about the same time that he wrote that letter he objected to the nature and power of the executive in Pennsylvania, desiring a multiple head with curtailed powers instead of the existing single governor.⁷⁰ Although at various times in his career he appeared somewhat conservative, he was usually as democratic as was Jefferson.

Like Jefferson, he was usually too optimistic about the good results to be derived from the use of human reason and the functioning of majority opinion. He wrote that "that which is right will become popular."⁷¹ "Mankind are always ripe enough to understand their true interest, provided it be presented clearly to their understanding."⁷² "Principles must rest on their own merits, and if they are good they certainly will."⁷³ "No man is prejudiced in favor of a thing knowing it to be wrong. He is attached to it in the belief that it is right, and when he sees that it is not so, the prejudice will be gone."⁷⁴

Believing that what is right will become popular, he declared that the rule of the majority should be the law, "so long as the majority do not impose conditions on the minority different from what they impose on themselves. . . . there is no injustice."⁷⁵ "The law is king."⁷⁶ He believed that even a bad law should be obeyed, writing, "I have always held it an opinion (making it also a practise) that it is better to obey a bad law, making use at the same time of every argument to show its errors, and procure its repeal, than forcibly to violate it, because the precedent of breaking a bad law might weaken the force, and lead to a discretionary violation

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, IV, 458, 460-461

⁷¹ *Ibid*, I, 332

⁷² *Ibid*, II, 392

⁷³ *Ibid*, II, 395

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, II, 399

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, II, 509

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, II, 154

of those which are good " " But "Laws which are difficult to enforce cannot generally be good " " This reasoning was advanced in recent years in connection with the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act

Luke Jefferson again, he feared too much law and government He believed that "the sum of government is much less than is generally thought, and we are not yet rid of the habit of excessive government " " He objected to surrendering all rights even to a democracy, insisting that what he termed "intellectual rights" should be retained by the individual " He was anxious to keep the proper balance between the rights of the individual and the powers of government, and one of his fundamental objections to monarchy was that when the balance is once struck it cannot be changed " Lest something even remotely approaching this hereditary compact should develop in America, he suggested that it might be well if all laws became inoperative at the end of thirty years so that one generation could not legislate for the next Thus unnecessary and obsolete laws would automatically disappear "

In order the better to insure the individual against governmental oppression, he preferred a multiple executive " In Pennsylvania, which had a single executive, he objected to the governor's veto power and control of patronage " He objected also to the long term of office of the governor, and to the indirect election of national senators " He was dissatis-

⁷⁷ *Ibid* , II, 397

⁷⁸ *Ibid* , II, 444

⁷⁹ *Ibid* , II, 245

⁸⁰ *Ibid* , II, 307

⁸¹ *Ibid* , II, 248

⁸² *Ibid* , II, 165

⁸³ *Ibid* , III, 214

⁸⁴ *Ibid* , IV, 458, 460-461

⁸⁵ *Ibid* , IV, 464, 460-461

fied with the judiciary of the state,"⁸⁶ and he advocated arbitration, instead of the usual court procedure, in cases of equity.⁸⁷ In short, the Pennsylvania constitution concentrated too much power in the hands of too few, was too conservative to suit him.

On the other hand, his attitude toward property, during the American period of his career, was conservative. In defending the Bank of North America, which he had helped to organize, against the Pennsylvania Assembly, which attempted to rescind its charter in 1786, he objected to laws invalidating contracts between the state and persons. He admitted that "it is possible an assembly, in the heat and indiscretion of party, and meditating on power rather than on the principle by which all power in a republican government is governed, that of equal justice, may fall into the error of passing such an act . . . , but it would be an actless act, an act that goes for nothing, an act which the courts of justice, and the established laws of the land, could know nothing of."⁸⁸

There are two interesting implications here. The first is that Paine foreshadowed Marshall's decision in the Dartmouth College Case in 1819, denying the power of a state to invalidate a contract between a state and a corporation.⁸⁹ The second is that Paine's insistence on the duty of the courts to "know nothing of" such an act implies the power of the courts to disregard or overrule it—or, if you will, to declare it illegal or unconstitutional. This was in 1786, which was a year before the Constitutional Convention met and seventeen years before this power was first exercised by Marshall in the case of *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 464

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 459, 467

⁸⁸ Paine, *Political Writings* (New York: Solomon King, 1830), I, 376-377

⁸⁹ *Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, 4 *Wheaton*, 518

⁹⁰ 1 *Cranch*, 237

Later, when he wrote "The Rights of Man" in England in answer to Edmund Burke's "Reflections on the French Revolution," he made rather revolutionary proposals about property. Although he opposed strong government, like Jefferson, he paradoxically desired at the same time to extend, in some respects, the sphere of government.

In this essay, where he was concerned with England rather than with America, he deprecated the English tax on luxuries and argued for a tax on incomes. He wrote that real luxuries are not things, but rather "the means of procuring them." "Admitting that any annual sum, say, for instance, one thousand pounds, is necessary or sufficient for the support of a family, consequently the second thousand is of the nature of a luxury, the third still more so, and by proceeding on, we shall at last arrive at a sum that may not improperly be called a prohibitable luxury. It would be impolitic to set bounds to property acquired by industry, and therefore it is right to place the prohibition beyond the probable acquisition to which industry can extend, but there ought to be a limit to property or the accumulation of it by bequest." Consequently, he devised a scale of graduated taxation on annual income which would be so oppressive to large incomes as to make it desirable to the recipients to share their wealth and thus cut down their tax rate.* He proposed that the revenue afforded by these incomes and inheritance taxes be used for the poor and for old-age pensions."

Still later, while he was in France participating in the French Revolution, he wrote his essay entitled "Agrarian Justice," which was an effort to revolutionize the French economic system into conformity to the political revolution. The point of departure in this essay was some of Rousseau's ideas, but the essay was, in turn, to provide not only the point of departure but even some of the exact phraseology for Henry

* *Writings*, II, 496

91 *Ibid.*, II, 485, 493

George's "Progress and Poverty," which was written nearly a century later

In this essay, Paine followed Rousseau in questioning "Whether that state that is proudly, perhaps erroneously called civilization, has most promoted or most injured the general happiness of man " In the natural state, there are none of those "spectacles of human misery which poverty and want present to our eyes, in all the towns and streets of Europe " But he had the good sense to depart from Rousseau in admitting that "the natural state is without those advantages which flow from agriculture, arts, science, and manufactures " Consequently, since civilization has its advantages, and since in any case "it is never possible to [return] from the civilized to the natural state," his concern was "to remedy the evils, and preserve the benefits that have arisen" with civilization "

In this essay, his first assumption in forming his proposal was that "the condition of every person born into the world, after a state of civilization commences, ought not to be worse than if he had been born before that period " Before civilization, the earth was "the common property of the human race", "every man was born to property " Since this is the case, "it is the value of the improvement only, and not the earth itself, which should be considered [private] property " Moreover, "Personal property is the effect of society", it is "impossible for an individual to acquire personal property without the aid of society", and so each "owes on every principle of justice, of gratitude, and of civilization, a part of that accumulation to society from whence the whole came " "Every proprietor, therefore, of cultivated land, owes to the community, a ground-rent, for the land which he holds "

From this ground-rent or land tax of ten per cent, levied at the time of the sale or inheritance of land, there would de-

⁹² *Ibid* , III, 322-341

rive a fund with which to indemnify "more than half the inhabitants of every nation" who have been "dispossessed" of "their natural inheritance" of a share in the land, and who are thus doomed to a "species of poverty and wretchedness that did not exist before" civilization. This would be a "national fund, out of which there should be paid to every person [rich or poor], when arrived at the age of twenty-one years, the sum of fifteen pounds sterling, as compensation in part, for the loss of his or her natural inheritance." Also, "the sum of ten pounds per annum, during life, to every person now living, of the age of fifty years, and to all others as they shall arrive at that age" (Attention, Townsendites!) This endowment for youth and pension for age would be a compensation, not a gift, "a right, and not a charity", a preventive of poverty, not a dole to the poor.

Not only would this be a compensation for disinheritance in land, but in the case of underpaid laborers and employees it would be a just remuneration for their toil. For "the accumulation of personal property is, in many instances, the effect of paying too little for labor that produced it, the consequence of which is, that the working hand perishes in old age, and the employer abounds in affluence. It is, perhaps, impossible to proportion exactly the price of labor to the profits it produces, and it will also be said, as an apology for the injustice, that were a workman to receive an increase of wages, he would not save it against old age, nor be much better for it in the interim. Make, then, society the treasurer, to guard it for him in the common fund, for it is no reason, that because he might not make good use of it himself, that another should take it." Perhaps our new philosophy of Social Security was never more lucidly stated than it was here, a century and a half ago.

Although, during the American period of his political career, Paine was economically a conservative, even at that

⁹² *Ibid* III, 322-344

time he was economically progressive enough so that he did not consider slaves legitimate property. Like Jefferson, he was so consistently a democrat that he wished to end slavery. One of his first pieces of writing published in America was a plea for abolition. "With what consistency, or decency," he asked, "can Americans complain so loudly of attempts to enslave them, while they hold so many hundred thousands in slavery?" As usual, he was not content to be merely destructive in his criticism, and he suggested in the same breath that slaves be given "lands upon reasonable rent," or that they might "form useful barrier settlements on the frontiers."

Conway claims for Paine the distinction of being "the first American abolitionist."⁹³ This is more than doubtful, John Woolman and others had already worked for abolition. But Paine no doubt was one of the founders of the "Society for the Relief of Free Negroes, Unlawfully held in Bondage," which was formed only a little more than a month after his abolition article was published.⁹⁴ Conway claims, probably too enthusiastically, that this was "the first American Anti-Slavery Society."

4

When the American Revolution had been completed, when the prospects of an English revolution faded, and when the French Revolution changed its character, eliminating him from political activity, Paine turned to his two other hobbies besides revolution.

Like Franklin, he had an inventive mind, although invention was a mere hobby. Like Franklin again, his inventions were utilitarian. He discussed steam-engines with Robert Fulton, and his constructive interest in the invention of the steamboat was attested by Fitch, Rumsey, Henry, Ful-

⁹³ *Ibid*, I, 7-8

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, I, 2-3

ton, and Fulton's British associate, Sir Richard Phillips.⁹⁵ His single-arch iron bridge won him recognition in France and exploitation in England.⁹⁶ He investigated the cause and possible prevention of yellow fever, and in his characteristic, constructive way he wrote an essay suggesting that wharves be built on stone or iron arches along the waterfront of New York so that water could get under them freely and wash away germs.⁹⁷

His most characteristic project was his attempt to invent a "gunpowder motor" which would use as fuel gunpowder mixed with a retarding agent, and which would be used as motive power for vehicles. Thus he envisioned something comparable to the automobile. He was led to this project by his belief that gunpowder could not have been intended by God to be only a means of destruction.⁹⁸ Surely no man ever put his belief in a beneficent deity to a more practical and ingenious application.⁹⁹

5

Paine's greatest hobby seems to have been religion. When he was incarcerated in the Bastille by the radical French Revolutionists, he completed "The Age of Reason" for the avowed purpose of deterring the French from atheism by offering them religion, without irrationalism. He wrote that "the people of France were running headlong into atheism, and I had the work translated into their own language, to stop them in that career, and fix them in the first article of every man's creed, who has any creed at all—I believe in God."¹⁰⁰ He wrote to Samuel Adams, "I endangered [my life] by opposing atheism, and yet some of your priests

⁹⁵ Conway, II, 480

⁹⁶ Sedgwick, 48-49

⁹⁷ *Writings*, IV, 473-474

⁹⁸ Conway, II, 281

⁹⁹ *Writings*, IV, 205

cry out in the war whoop of monarchist priestcraft, what an infidel, what a wicked man is Thomas Paine! They might as well add, for he believes in God, and is against the shedding of blood " ¹⁰⁰

Not all his American countrymen labelled him as an atheist. Moncure D Conway, a Universalist minister and the best biographer of Paine, wrote that he "was a Christian " ¹⁰¹ This is an error in the other direction. It is true, as Conway pointed out, that in his earlier political writings Paine appears to be a Christian. There may be two reasons for this. First, he may have wished to appeal to the religion of the orthodox as a basis for patriotism. Secondly, he may not have wished his own heresy to appear, because it would both weaken his political influence with the orthodox and also confuse the issue and lead to internal dissension. ¹⁰² In his political writings, especially those which dealt with American independence, he subordinated everything to his enthusiastic, patriotic purpose, and what he could not subordinate he utilized or ridiculed. Thus it was that he abused Lord Howe so violently, ¹⁰³ that he appealed even to the selfishness of the colonists, ¹⁰⁴ that he used intemperate language regarding Tories and Englishmen, ¹⁰⁵ and that he studiously construed into advantages such misfortunes as the captures of Philadelphia, New York and Charleston by the British. ¹⁰⁶ Christianity, like these other weapons, was a useful tool which he was too clever to throw away.

He was early a heretic. He wrote in Part I of "The Age of Reason," "From the time I was capable of conceiving an idea, and acting upon it by reflection, I either doubted the

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, IV, 205

¹⁰¹ Conway, II, 215

¹⁰² *Ibid*, II, 204. Best, 307

¹⁰³ *Writings*, II, 238

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, II, 287

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, I, 215-216

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, I, 243-244, 238, 255-256

truth of the Christian system, or thought it to be a strange affair, I scarcely knew which it was, but I well remember, when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation of mine, who was a great devotee of the church, upon what is called redemption by the death of the Son of God After the sermon was ended, I went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myself, that it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man, that killed his son, when he could not revenge himself any other way, and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing, I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons This was not one of that kind of thoughts that had anything in it of childish levity, it was to me a serious reflection, arising from the idea I had that God was too good to do such an action, and also too almighty to be under any necessity of doing it I believe in the same manner at this moment, and I moreover believe that any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a little child cannot be a true system " ¹⁰⁷

He might have been something of a heretic, and still have been a Christian It is only one kind of a Christian who believes, for instance, in the Trinity Paine was not one of these Of Jesus he said, "So far from being the Son of God, he did not exist even as a man He is merely an imaginary or allegorical character, as Apollo, as Hercules, Jupiter, and all the deities of antiquity were " ¹⁰⁸ He considered the book of Matthew "at best to be a romance, the principal personage of which is an imaginary or allegorical character founded upon some tale " ¹⁰⁹ Yet in Part I of "The Age of Reason" he admitted, "that such a person as Jesus Christ

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, IV, 64-65

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, IV, 404

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, IV, 388

existed, and that he was crucified, which was the mode of execution at that day, are historical relations strictly within the limits of probability " " In any case, the Virgin Birth was incredible to him, he explained that Jesus "was a Jew by birth and by profession, and he was the son of God in like manner that every other person is—for the Creator is the Father of all " "

He did not believe in miracles "Everything is a miracle in one sense, whilst in the other sense there is no such thing as a miracle It is a miracle when compared with our power, and to our comprehension, it is not a miracle compared to the power which performs it As, therefore, we know not the extent to which either nature or art can go, there is no criterion to determine what a miracle is " " In any case, he did not consider miracles to be effective builders of faith, for they degrade "the Almighty into the character of a showman, playing tricks " "

Another kind of Christian denies most of the so-called supernatural, but accepts Jesus as the supreme philosopher and teacher Paine would not even do this He vigorously attacked the important Christian teaching, "Whoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also " " "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you " " He wrote that "the doctrine of not retaliating injuries is much better expressed in Proverbs It is there said 'If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink ' " " He considered that, when meekness is carried

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, IV, 27

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, IV, 39

¹¹² *Ibid*, IV, 77-78

¹¹³ *Ibid*, IV, 79

¹¹⁴ *Matthew*, V, 30 *Writings*, IV, 186-187

¹¹⁵ *Matthew*, V, 44 *Writings*, IV, 186-187

¹¹⁶ *Proverbs*, XXV, 21 *Writings*, IV, 186-187

to the extreme advocated by Jesus, "it is assassinating the dignity of forbearance and sinking man into a spaniel . . . It is incumbent on man as a moralist that he does not revenge an injury, and it is equally good in a political sense, for there is no end to retaliation . . . , but to love in proportion to the injury, if it could be done, would be to offer a premium for crime" ¹¹⁷ He would concede only that Jesus was "a virtuous and amiable man . . . The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind, and though similar systems of morality have been practised by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before . . . , it has not been exceeded by any" ¹¹⁸

A third kind of Christian is a member of the Christian Church, because he considers the Bible and the church a moral guide and authority . . . Conway wrote that Paine desired the reformation, and not the destruction, of Christian churches ¹¹⁹ This is true only if the reformation were sweeping enough so that the churches ceased to be Christian . . . He declared, in his profession of faith at the beginning of Part I of "The Age of Reason," "I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of . . . My own mind is my church" ¹²⁰ In a letter to Joel Barlow in 1807, he wrote that "had the Christian religion done any good in the world I would not have exposed it, however fabulous I might believe it to be" ¹²¹ Regarding the foundation of the Christian Church, the Bible, he wrote, "I can write a better book myself" ¹²² "The Bible is too ridiculous for criticism" ¹²³ Yet he spent much time and effort criticizing it

¹¹⁷ *Writings*, IV, 187

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, IV, 26

¹¹⁹ Conway, II, 241

¹²⁰ *Writings*, IV, 22

¹²¹ Conway, II, 196

¹²² *Writings*, IV, 222

¹²³ *Ibid*, IV, 137

He was not original in his attacks on Christianity and the Bible. Indeed, it is customary to say that he wrote nothing either very new or very convincing. One critic wrote that " 'The Age of Reason's' racy style has not sufficed to keep it alive " ¹²⁴ Another wrote, "We do not regard him as either politically or religiously a great leader. Intellectually and religiously he was a child of the French Revolution " ¹²⁵ Here is a case, as in a well-known riddle, of a child being its own father! Another wrote that "no modern scholar regards Thomas Paine's 'Age of Reason' as an important contribution to the understanding of the Bible " ¹²⁶

Conway is more favorable in his judgment, writing that while "The Age of Reason" is "the product of its time, the renewal of an old siege—begun far back indeed as Celsus—its intellectual originality is none the less remarkable in approach " ¹²⁷ Sir Leslie Stephen, whose great "History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century" is a standard authority, wrote that Paine "anticipated a good many criticisms, obvious enough when once stated, but requiring no little independence and directness of thought in the unguided investigator. So, for example, he remarks upon the inconsistency between the two narratives of the creation [in his "Letter to Mr Erskine"], and points out that in one narrative (he had only the English Bible before him) the phrase 'Lord God' is substituted for God in the other. He has noted, therefore, the distinction made by later criticism between the Jehovist and the Elohist. This and other remarks tending to justify a later than the accepted date for the composition of the Old Testament imply great acuteness in a self-taught critic, and would be accepted now even by professors of divinity " ¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Brownson, W. C., *A Short History of the American Revolution* (Boston, 1902), 79.

¹²⁵ Anonymous, "Thomas Paine," *Outlook*, XCIV, 331-335.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, XCIV, 608.

¹²⁷ Conway, II, 194-195.

¹²⁸ Stephen, Leslie, "Thomas Paine," *Fortnightly Review*, LX, 267-281 (August 1, 1891).

In his main theological principles, he was not original. The English historian and philosopher, David Hume, had "systematically denied the truth of all miraculous narratives,"¹²⁹ and was a "systematic sceptic."¹³⁰ Voltaire, Rousseau, Franklin, Jefferson and others, had disbelieved in the inerrancy of the Bible and Christian theology. Yet the eminent English philosopher, John Locke, accepted "the authority at once of reason and of the Bible,"¹³¹ and believed that the truth of Christianity is proved by the evidence provided by miracles.¹³² The English philosopher and Unitarian, Joseph Priestley, accepted miraculous revelation.¹³³

The assertions of Conway to the contrary, Paine was not a Christian. He did not believe in the Trinity, nor in Jesus as a member of the godhead. He did not believe in the Virgin Birth, the miracles, or the resurrection of Jesus. He did not believe in Jesus as a philosopher and teacher who was greater than all other philosophers and teachers. He did not accept the Christian Church and Bible as an infallible moral guide, and, so far from accepting these things, he opposed them with all his force and energy. In this, he was taken seriously by his generation, so seriously, that even the Unitarians took care to disown him, and the Quakers were embarrassed by his occasional compliments.¹³⁴

6

Although he was not a Christian in any sense of the word, in his own way he was a devout believer. He said, "My own mind is my church."¹³⁵ Gamaliel Bradford wrote, in connec-

¹²⁹ Stephen, Leslie, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1876), II, 204.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 44.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, I, 94.

¹³² *Ibid.*, I, 100.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, I, 65.

¹³⁴ Conway, II, 231, 420.

¹³⁵ *Writings*, IV, 22.

tion with Paine, "Perhaps it will be found that the rebel is always a believer, whereas the conservative is the true skeptic, who is afraid to lift his foot, lest he should not know where to set it down" ¹³⁶ As a rebel, Paine was a believer, a believer in some things as they were and in everything else as it was not, but might be

First of all, he believed in complete religious freedom ¹³⁷ He was not the first either in America or elsewhere to advocate religious freedom but he was in the minority group when it came to actual freedom He considered intolerance the worst of tyrannies, "every other species of tyranny is limited to the world we live in, but this attempts a stride beyond the grave, and seeks to pursue us into eternity" ¹³⁸ But even tolerance, like intolerance, is a despotism "The one assumes to itself the right of withholding liberty of conscience, and the other of granting it The one is the pope, armed with fire and fagot, and the other is the pope selling or granting indulgences" ¹³⁹

He believed that it is not only right, but good, that there should be religious freedom Even self-interest dictates it, he wrote, because "he who denies to another this right [of religious freedom], makes a slave of himself to his present opinion because he precludes himself the right of changing it" ¹⁴⁰ He wrote that intellectual honesty depends upon it, for it is "necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself Infidelity does not consist in believing or in disbelieving, it consists in professing to believe what one does not believe" ¹⁴¹ Not only did he believe that "it is the will of the Almighty that there should be a diversity of

¹³⁶ Bradford, Gamaliel, *Damaged Souls* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), 67

¹³⁷ *Writings*, IV, 84

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 211

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 325

¹⁴⁰ *Theological Works* (Chicago: Belford, Clark, 1882), 3

¹⁴¹ *Writings*, IV, 22

religious opinions among us,"¹⁴² but he went farther, and asked, "Why may we not suppose that the great Father of all is pleased with variety of devotion?"¹⁴³ Religious agreement seemed to him often to spell mere lack of thought. "I do not believe that any two men, on what are called doctrinal points, think alike who think at all. It is only those who have not thought that appear to agree."¹⁴⁴

There were only two groups of which he despaired. "The atheist who affects to reason, and the fanatic who rejects reason. The one is a half-rational of whom there is some hope, the other a visionary to whom we must be charitable."¹⁴⁵ He wrote that credulity "is not a crime, but it becomes criminal by resisting conviction."¹⁴⁶ He insisted upon an open mind in order that the way might be left open for the discovery of value in all religions.

In consequence of his belief in the value of all religions, he could not accept any one of them *in toto*. One of the wisest things he ever said was that "if ever a universal religion should prevail, it will not be by believing anything new, but in getting rid of redundancies."¹⁴⁷ With his usual consistency, he designed a church of his own which would cull out only the essential and good from each religion. This church, which he actually established in Paris, he called "The Church of Theophilanthropy" from the Greek words for God, love and man.¹⁴⁸ According to Sedgwick, it was "the first theistic and ethical society,"¹⁴⁹ and "the precursor of the multifarious ethical societies which have since sprung up."¹⁵⁰ Paine wrote that theophilanthropists "avail themselves of all the wise

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, I, 108

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, II, 516

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 243

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 181

¹⁴⁶ Quoted by Best, 312

¹⁴⁷ Sedgwick, 122

¹⁴⁸ Conway, II, 256

¹⁴⁹ Sedgwick, 122

precepts that have been transmitted by all writers of all countries and in all ages" "leading to the adoration of God and the love of man" ¹⁵⁰ Deism was their main theological tenet "The only religion that has not been invented and that has in it every evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple deism It must have been the first, and will probably be the last, that man believes" ¹⁵¹ He defined deism as being "the belief in one God, and an imitation of his moral character or the practice of what is called moral virtues— and it is upon this only (so far as religion is concerned) that I rest all my hope of happiness hereafter" ¹⁵²

Thus far he was on ground which still seems safe, but he went on to inquire how we can prove that God exists He readily answered his own question by writing that "it is only by the exercise of reason that man can discover God" ¹⁵³ Reason proves God, because "God is the first cause" ¹⁵⁴ Motion is not a property of matter, and "it is because motion is not a property of matter that perpetual motion is an impossibility in the hand of every being except the creator of motion, When the pretenders to atheism can produce perpetual motion, and not till then, they may expect to be credited" ¹⁵⁵ Since Paine's day, science has gone so far that the question is far more complex than he ever dreamed

He was willing to go beyond reason when he came to the attributes of God, that was the only realm which he admitted to be beyond it * Further, while revelation in the Biblical sense was incredible to him, on the other hand he eloquently described the universe as God's revelation He believed that in his goodness and mercy God presents himself as an example

¹⁵⁰ *Writings*, IV, 234

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, IV, 190

¹⁵² *Ibid*, IV, 167

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, IV, 41

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, IV, 41, 242

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, IV, 240

* *Ibid*, IV, 49

to men "Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful" †

In his concepts of immortality, he was in advance of his time The ultra-orthodox view was, and still is, that we are to rise again in the body, but he wrote, "I trouble not myself about the manner of future existence I content myself with believing, even to positive conviction, that the power that gave me existence is able to continue it in any form that he pleases, either with or without this body, and it appears more probable to me that I shall continue to exist hereafter than that I should have had existence, as I now have, before that existence began" ¹¹⁶ "The doctrine of the resurrection of the same body, so far from being an evidence of immortality, appears to me to furnish an evidence against it, for if I had already died in this body, and am raised again in the same body in which I have died, it is presumptive evidence that I shall die again Besides , I had rather have a better body and a more convenient form than the present Every animal in the creation excels us in something The winged insects can pass over more space with greater ease The glide of the smallest fish, in proportion to its bulk, exceeds us in motion Even the sluggish snail can ascend from the bottom of a dungeon, where a man, by want of that ability, would perish, and a spider can launch itself from the top, as a playful amusement The personal powers of man are too little for the magnitude of the scene—too mean for the sublimity of the subject . The consciousness of

† *Ibid*, IV, 46

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, IV, 83

existence is not necessarily confined to the same form, nor to the same manner¹⁵⁷

"Those whose lives have been spent in doing good, and endeavoring to make their fellow-mortals happy, for this is the only way that we can serve God, will be happy hereafter and the very wicked will meet with some punishment This is my opinion It is consistent with my idea of God's justice, and with the reason that God has given me"¹⁵⁸

7

Paine is significant because he was not a merely destructive force Cheetham wrote that "his intention was more completely destructive than that of any other author that perhaps ever lived While conspiring to subvert all government, he meditated the overthrow of all religion"¹⁵⁹ His first intention was indeed destruction, but destruction, not in order to overthrow religion, but rather to disencumber it and lay bare its true essence He was like a Greek sculptor who started with a solid block of stone and pared it away into the lithe, naked figure of an athlete But he was not driven into atheism in the completeness of his destruction, he did not shatter the block of stone into a heap of chips All that he believed in was one God, one natural and universal revelation, and a system of ethics consisting of doing good to one another, but to these things he clung steadfastly

He is important because he "spoke to men who sweated for their daily bread, and read by the light of the evening fire" "Those who had gone before him—the band of eighteenth century free-thinkers—were scholars speaking to men of education"¹⁶⁰ Paine transposed religious and political principles from the study to the convention, translated

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, IV, 177

¹⁵⁸ *Theological Works*, 280

¹⁵⁹ Cheetham, 177-179

¹⁶⁰ Sedgwick, 118-119

them from the treatise to the newspaper, and transfused them from the heads of philosophers to the hearts of men in the street

He is important because he opposed the old religion, not only on account of its unreasonableness, but also because it was inhumane. No philosopher had done this, at least with anything like the fervor with which he did it. As Conway well wrote, "The Age of Reason" was "the uprising of the human heart against the religion of inhumanity."¹⁶¹ It was pitiful that at that time men believed in a God less good and just than themselves. This inconsistency was Paine's incentive to write and the object of his attack. He did not attack the Christian God, he attacked the primitive Jehovah.¹⁶²

He is important because, at the same time that he hated orthodox religion, he was in love with rational religion. Philosophers had accepted rationalism calmly and through logical necessity, he embraced it passionately and with joy. Others had made their minds revolt against orthodoxy, it was his heart also which revolted. He felt rationalism, as well as reasoned it. Yet a prominent Roman Catholic writer wrote recently of him that "had he known not only nature but human nature, he would have seen that religion is a product of the human heart."¹⁶³ More than the other deists of his time, he believed passionately in his religion. His devoutness was more than merely echoing philosophy in such a way that it becomes important to the man in the street, he carried philosophy to its perfection, making its reasonableness passionate. Franklin made rational religion utilitarian, practical; Paine made it spiritual, passionate.

Perhaps the thing about Paine which should be most impressive, but which too often has gone unrecognized, is the

¹⁶¹ *Writings*, II, 198

¹⁶² Sedgwick, 144

¹⁶³ Gillis, James M., "Tom Paine", *Catholic World*, CXXI, 48-58 (April 1925)

magnificent spaciousness of his mind and his passionate imagination. He suggested independence to America, and not only independence but complete disengagement from European affairs. He suggested democratic government, not merely for one province or even thirteen provinces, but for the whole continent. He opposed cruel treatment of animals¹⁶⁴ and the holding of slaves, but he did not confine himself to such obvious abuses. He advocated equality for women,¹⁶⁵ the prevention as well as the treatment of disease, the distribution rather than the abolition of wealth, the prevention of wars by limitation of armaments and leagues of nations, instead of by passive submission to force. He not merely rejected narrow concepts of God and his revelation, but conceived great ones—complete religious freedom, truth in all religions, the universe the revelation of one God.

Few men, if any, conceived and described the great panorama of the universe as well as he. He was emotionally conscious of the microscopic, writing that "we find the earth, the waters, and the air that surrounds it, filled and crowded with life, down from the largest animals that we know of to the smallest insects the naked eye can behold, and from thence to others still smaller, and totally invisible without the assistance of the microscope. Every tree, every plant, every leaf, serves not only as a habitation but as a world to some numerous race, till animal existence becomes so exceedingly refined that the effluvia of a blade of grass would be food for thousands."¹⁶⁶ He was conscious of the telescopic, writing that "we see ourselves surrounded with innumerable worlds."¹⁶⁷ He was conscious of a universe greater than we can see, writing that the world which we can see is "probably but a small display of the immensity of

¹⁶⁴ Conway, I, 44

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 45 *Writings*, IV, 433, I, 53-54

¹⁶⁶ *Writings*, IV, 67-68

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 216

power by which millions of other worlds, to me invisible by their distance, were created and continue to exist " ¹⁶⁸ He was conscious of a universe greater than we can ever conceive, writing that "when we think of the size of a room, our ideas limit themselves to the walls and there they stop, but when our imagination darts into space, we cannot conceive any walls or boundaries it can have, and if we suppose a boundary the question immediately renews itself and asks, what is beyond that boundary? And in the same manner, what beyond the next boundary? and so on until the fatigued imagination returns and says, there is no end " ¹⁶⁹

With contempt, he wrote that "the term 'six days' is ridiculous enough when applied to God" and the creation of the earth " ¹⁷⁰ If it were logically asked why God could not create the universe in six days as well as in any other length of time, he had the reply that gradual growth and development according to natural law is more majestic and divine than is hocus-pocus " ¹⁷¹ He attacked the Bible, as he attacked monarchy, because it was not sublime enough to command his imagination. It is not, he declared, great enough for God, it is a libel on him, being rather the word of a demon than of God! " ¹⁷² "What! does not the creator of the universe know how to write? When we contemplate the vast economy of the universe, when we launch our eye into the boundless ocean of space and see ourselves surrounded with innumerable worlds, not one of which varies from its appointed place,—when we trace the power of the Creator. from an atom to a universe—can we suppose that the mind that could conceive such a design cannot write without inconsistency? The

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid* , IV, 49

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid* , IV, 67

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid* , IV, 415

¹⁷¹ *Ibid* , IV, 366 note

¹⁷² *Ibid* , IV, 30, 34

writings of Thomas Paine, even of Thomas Paine, need no commentator to explain, arrange, and rearrange their several parts to make them intelligible—he can relate a fact, or write an essay, without forgetting in one page what he has written in another—certainly, then, did the God of all perfection condescend to write or dictate a book, that book would be as perfect as Himself is perfect ” ”

The true word of God is the universe, and all science is the true theology ” ” “The creation speaketh in universal language It is an ever-existing original, which every man can read It cannot be forged, it cannot be counterfeited, it cannot be lost, it cannot be altered, it cannot be suppressed

It preaches to all nations and to all worlds, and reveals to man all that it is necessary for man to know of God ” ” “What is it we want to know? Does not the creation, the universe we behold, preach to us the existence of an almighty power that governs and regulates the whole? And is not the evidence that this creation holds out to our senses infinitely stronger than anything that we can read in a book which any imposter might make ” ” ” When the orthodox object that this is a cold, dumb Bible, he replies that ‘the Bible of the creation is inexhaustible in texts Every part of science, whether connected with the geography of the universe, with the systems of animal and vegetable life, or with the properties of inanimate matter, is a text as well for devotion as for philosophy—for gratitude as for human improvement ” ” ”

Paine was a complex personality, even though not a professional philosopher Claiming to rely upon reason, he scarcely realized that it failed him When he reached his

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, IV, 216

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, IV, 50

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, IV, 40

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, IV, 188

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, IV, 194

greatest heights, he conceived and felt rather than reasoned "It is difficult to conceive . . . that space can have no end," he wrote "It is difficult beyond the power of man to conceive an eternal duration of what we call time" ¹⁷⁸ Yet he strove for these and greater concepts, and he succeeded beyond his generation in approaching them If there seems no longer to be a scientific basis for some of his concepts, if the most radical thinkers of our own time have advanced beyond him, none the less, in his time, his concepts were magnificent In comparison with the concepts of the mass of humanity in our own time, they are still great, and he attained an elevation long unexcelled and seldom equalled

In vision, in sympathies, in activities, America produced two internationalists as soon as she became a nation—Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine But in that generation there was only one inspired and articulate "universalist" in the scientific, philosophical and religious connotations of the word, and he was Thomas Paine Politically, he was a citizen of the world, religiously, a citizen of the universe "My country is the world, my religion . . . to do good" ¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid* , IV, 41

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid* , II, 472

IX

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING GENTLEMAN REFORMER

1

BY HEREDITY, Channing was an aristocrat, by environment, conservative, and so perhaps he deserves as much credit for becoming liberal as many for becoming radical. Considering the natural extremism of human nature, probably he deserves more credit for his happy medium. By profession a minister, he was preeminently a man of words and a preacher. His liberalism, although genuine and unmistakable, was mostly theoretical, it was not usually turned into action, nor did it generally lead others into action. His emphasis was on being, rather than on doing.

He was born in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1780. His mother was a daughter of William Ellery, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and the family was connected with the Lowells, Cabots, Lees, and Jacksons. His father was Attorney-General of Rhode Island, and his family was connected with the Danas, Allstons and Gibbsses. One of William's sisters was the wife of Washington Allston, the famous painter. His brother Walter was dean of the Harvard Medical School and an author of scientific works. His brother Edward was editor of the *North American Review* and held the famous Boylston Professorship of Rhetoric at Harvard for thirty-two years. His son William Francis was an inventor of note, collaborating with Moses G. Farmer on the fire-alarm telegraph, and holding other patents on electrical

devices. His nephew and namesake, William Ellery Channing, was a poet of repute, a good friend of Emerson, Hawthorne, and Thoreau, and biographer and editor of the latter. Another nephew, William Henry Channing, was a biographer of his famous uncle and a Unitarian minister of importance, who finally made his home in England, where he succeeded the great James Martineau as minister of Hope Street Chapel in Liverpool. His son became a member of Parliament, and his daughter married Sir Edwin Arnold. Two other nephews became noted, one as acting President of Cornell University, and another as a famous historian and professor at Harvard.¹ Like the Adamses, Lowells, Holmeses, Eliots, and other New England Unitarian families, the Channings were distinguished for several consecutive generations.

Channing graduated from Harvard and was later offered a professorship there, which he declined because of consistently poor health. Upon graduation, he had gone to Richmond, Virginia, as a tutor for the Randolph family. But after two years of self-imposed deprivation there, which permanently weakened his physique, he returned home and continued his own studies by himself. In 1802, he returned to Harvard to study theology, and in 1803, was ordained and installed as minister of the Federal Street Society in Boston.

It is significant that the larger and more fashionable Brattle Street Society also gave him a call, but he conscientiously chose the more needy congregation. Both were orthodox Congregational in theology, and he filled his pulpit quietly but well, until 1815, when he and his congregation discovered that they had turned sharply toward Unitarianism. It was no over-night conversion, during twelve quiet years the change had gradually been taking place until, finally, it

¹ See *Dictionary of American Biography* articles on the various Channings, etc.

² Brooks, Charles T. *William Ellery Channing* (Boston: Roberts, 1880), 91.

became obvious to all. During the following fifteen, of his total pastorate of almost forty years in the Federal Street Society, from 1815 to 1830, he came forward as the leader in the Unitarian movement.¹ During the final twelve years, with Unitarianism widely recognized and organized, he went on to become what has properly been termed a humanitarian.²

At his death in 1842, he was an international figure. Tributes were paid to him on all sides, and the bells of even the Roman Catholic cathedral in Boston were tolled for him. The Roman Catholic Emperor, Dom Pedro of Brazil, visiting Cambridge thirty years after his death, had President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard take him to visit Channing's grave, where he broke off a maple leaf overhanging the tomb, exclaiming, "I am going to put that leaf into my best edition of Channing. I have read all his published works,—some of them many times over. He was a very great man."³ Nearly one hundred years after his death, however, in a city such as Erie, Pennsylvania, the Unitarian minister is not recognized by his fellow Protestant clergymen to the extent of even being permitted to join the local Ministerial Association.

2

In the first Thanksgiving sermon of his ministry, he almost echoed Jonathan Edwards when he declared, "There is nothing in us to recommend us to God. Sinners as we are, we are vile in his sight. Our sins cry to God for unmingled vengeance. We see blessings descending from infinite heights on beings who have fallen an infinite depth."⁴ It is a far

¹ Sunderland, Jacob T., *The Story of Channing* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1921), 21.

² Fenn, William W., "William Ellery Channing and the Growth of Spiritual Christianity", *Pioneers of Religious Liberty in America* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1903), 214.

³ Quoted by Eliot, Charles W., *Four American Leaders* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1906), 65-66.

⁴ Quoted by Brooks, 105.

cry from this to his letter in 1831, in which he said that "the human and the angelic nature are essentially one"⁷ In his early years he had been influenced in Newport by Samuel Hopkins, who had been associated with Edwards,⁸ and who had outdistanced even Edwards when he declared that we ought to be willing "to be damned for the glory of God"⁹

During the early years of his ministry, Channing sometimes wrote for the liberal-baiting religious paper entitled *The Pioneer* which was published by Rev Jedediah Morse of Charlestown, Massachusetts, who is better known as the geographer and father of Samuel F B Morse, inventor of the telegraph In an ordination sermon which he preached in 1808, he warned a young minister against liberalism,¹⁰ but in 1813, he had shifted his position sufficiently to sponsor a magazine entitled the *Christian Disciple* in order to offset Morse's conservative publication¹¹ However, as late as 1819, the year of his famous Baltimore Sermon, he objected to the appointment of Andrews Norton as Dexter Professor of Biblical Criticism at Harvard because of Norton's liberalism¹² This was the same Norton who was to be horrified at Emerson's "atheism"¹³ Even in giving the Dudleyan Lecture at Harvard in 1821, Channing insisted that Christianity was miraculous in origin¹⁴ He did not become a Unitarian as rapidly as did James Freeman in 1785, nor did he ever become a thorough Unitarian in the sense of considering Jesus to be merely human

⁷ Quoted in *ibid* 154

⁸ Chadwick 57-58, 89, 122

⁹ Fishbein, Oliver W, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America, 1790-1815* (Williamsport, Pa Williamsport Printing and Binding Co, 1928), 26, 147-148

¹⁰ Chadwick 117

¹¹ *Ibid*, 74-75

¹² *Ibid*, 126

¹³ *Ibid*, 154

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 218

The most significant thing about the first period of his ministry was the innovation in preaching which he introduced. Previously, sermons had usually been cold and dry, dealing with the doctrinal and theological phases of religion. He preached on the ethical and moral phase of it and became warm and informal in delivery. This continued throughout his ministry, but it was especially noticeable at first because it was such a distinct innovation.¹⁵ He exhorted young ministers to follow his practise: "Look at subjects with your own eyes. Utter them with your own words. Be yourselves. Be natural." "The greatest of all defects in a preacher [is] being tame and dull."¹⁶

Late in his life, when he was at Newport, he often preached on Sunday afternoons to a small rural congregation, and these sermons were especially noted for their informality. A charming description of one of these occasions presents him sitting in front of the group in the small white meeting-house with its clear, translucent windows, looking around kindly and beginning quietly, "This is a beautiful world."¹⁷ Many of his sermons, especially those which do not deal with doctrine, are impressive for their eloquence and deep benevolence, even after the lapse of a hundred years.

This first period was a necessary prelude to the second period, when he carried his congregation into Unitarianism. It was the moral and ethical qualities of Calvinism, rather than its theological and doctrinal qualities, which were primarily responsible for his change,¹⁸ and during his first period of emphasis upon ethics at the expense of theology he paved the way for the theological change in the second period of his ministry. Indeed, emphasis upon the ethical and moral phases

¹⁵ Sunderland, 10.

¹⁶ Channing, *Works* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1886), 89.

¹⁷ Brooks, 183-184.

¹⁸ Sunderland, 16-18; Fenn, 214; Chadwick, 125, 63.

of Christianity at the expense of theology was itself an important part of Unitarianism. It might even be said that in intrinsic value, as well as in chronology, the new ethical emphasis took precedence over the new theology.¹ The real Unitarian reformation took place almost before it was heralded.

3

From a denominational and theological point of view, it is the second period of his ministry which is important. It was not until 1819 that he took the center of the Unitarian stage, although he was already one of the outstanding ministers of the country because of his ability and liberalism.

When Jared Sparks, who was later to become president of Harvard and a noted historian, was installed as minister of the prosperous liberal church in Baltimore in 1819, Channing was invited to preach the sermon. It was the famous one entitled "Unitarian Christianity", which became the battle-cry of Unitarianism.² In this sermon, "he upheld the Bible as "the records of God's successive revelations to mankind" but urged that it be interpreted with reason because "revelation is addressed to us as rational beings." "A revelation is a gift of light. It cannot thicken our darkness, and multiply our perplexities." He always upheld the use of reason in the consideration of theology, declaring in one of his sermons on "Self-Denial" "I am surer that my rational nature is from God than that any book is the expression of his will." "Never, never do violence to your rational nature."³ "The ultimate reliance of a human being is and must be on his own mind."⁴ In his sermon entitled "Christianity

¹ Chadwick, 12; Sandefur, 16-18.

² Allen, 191.

³ *Works* (1886), 267-81.

⁴ *Works* (1886), 158.

⁵ Quoted by Brooks, 177.

a Rational Religion," delivered in 1828, he based revelation on reason and declared it to be his "strongest conviction, that Christianity is reason in its most perfect form" " " In another sermon, he termed reason "a divine energy working in us" " " In his address on "War" in 1816, he gave an excellent example of his reasonable interpretation of the Bible when he declared that Jesus' precept to "Resist not evil" admits of exceptions. If it did not, "then civil government is prostrated, then the magistrate must in no case resist the injurious, then the subject must in no case employ the aid of the laws to enforce his rights. The very end and office of government is to resist evil men." In making this reasonable interpretation, he admonished his audience to "remember that to the renunciation of reason in the interpretation of Scripture we owe those absurdities which have sunk Christianity almost to the level of heathenism" " 20

Despite all this insistence upon reason, he wrote to a friend, in 1839, that "you seem to me to make religion too exclusively a product of the reason. I consider religion as founded in the joint operation of all our powers, as revealed by the reason, the imagination, and the moral sentiments" " " Miracles did not seem to him unreasonable, and they appealed to his imagination. He declared, in his sermon on "The Essence of the Christian Religion," that, "so far from shocking me", miracles "approve themselves at once to my intellect and my heart. They seem to me among the most reasonable as well as important events in human history." He prized them "not because they satisfy the passion for the wonderful," but because they prove that there is a "Being mightier than nature," "a spiritual power superior to the powers and laws of matter. And on the existence of such a power, the

²⁰ *Works* (Boston: James Munroe, 1818. 6 vols.), IV, 37-38, 64.

²⁵ *Works* (1886), 990.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 649.

²⁷ Quoted by Brooks, 156-157.

triumph of our own spiritual nature over death and material influences must depend " " Cotton Mather extolled reason, with limitations in practice, and Channing got little further. The eminent French writer and critic, Ernest Renan, later wrote that Channing was not a genuine rationalist because he believed in "revelation, in the supernatural, in miracles, in prophecy, in the Bible " " Channing was not so much a rationalist as Priestley and Paine had been, or as many since have been.

In the Baltimore sermon, after extolling reason, he continued by speaking of the most conspicuous doctrine of Unitarianism, the unity and oneness of God. "We complain of the doctrine of the Trinity, that not satisfied with making God three beings, it makes Jesus Christ two beings, [by considering him both human and divine] and thus introduces infinite confusion into our conceptions of his character." Jesus, according to the Trinitarians, could not suffer martyrdom, because he was considered a part of the deity. "It is true, his human mind suffered, but this, they tell us, was an infinitely small part of Jesus " " Unitarians believe that, since he was not part of the deity, "Christ's humiliation was real and entire, that the whole Savior, and not a part of him suffered that his crucifixion was a scene of deep and un-mixed agony " To consider him human, "renders his sufferings, and his patience and love in bearing them, incomparably more impressive and affecting.

But here appears his third great theological limitation, besides his halting and limited reliance on reason and his acceptance of the miraculous in Christianity. Although he denied the deity of Jesus as a member of the Trinity, he insisted upon the special divinity of Jesus, considering him as being more than merely human. He believed that Jesus had

¹ *Works* (1886), 1002

² Renan, M. Ernest *Studies of Religious History and Criticism* (New York: Carlton, 1864), 311-112.

pre-existed before being born of Mary, and that he was resurrected from the dead and would sit in judgment on the world." So far from clarifying the prevailing concepts of Jesus, he only complicated the situation by placing him nebulously and obscurely somewhere between God and man. As the French Roman Catholic writer, Lavallee, wrote in his volume entitled "Channing His Life and His Doctrine," which was crowned by the French Academy of Moral and Political Science for its high literary merit, "Who is this incomprehensible Being, who is not God, but who has the divine perfection, who is not man, but who is clothed in a human body? Is not here a mystery even more incomprehensible than that of the Catholic Trinity? Channing's is a strange conception of a Son of God who finds himself, in some sort, placed between heaven and earth, and whom one can liken to nothing but the demigods of paganism " "

Unlike Priestley, among early English Unitarians, and unlike Paine, Channing never accepted Jesus as merely a man. Regarding the opinions of Priestley, for instance, he once wrote, "I have little sympathy with his ethical and metaphysical doctrines " " However, as he grew older he put less and less emphasis on the nature of Jesus and more and more on his teachings and moral character, which he considered of supreme importance. For instance, in the year before his death, he wrote, "I am more and more inclined to believe in the simple humanity of Jesus " " In a letter to a friend he wrote in 1831, "For years I have felt a decreased interest in settling the precise rank of Jesus Christ. The power of his character seems to live in his spotless purity, his moral perfection, and not in the time during which he existed. I have attached less importance to this point from having

³⁰ Chadwick, 62, 80 Brooks, 115

³¹ Quoted by Brooks, 203

³² Quoted by Chadwick, 178, note 1

³³ *Ibid* , 230 231

learned that all minds are of one family, that the human and angelic nature are essentially one " "

After discussing the difficult points regarding the unity of God and the nature of Jesus, he continued his Baltimore sermon by discussing the nature of God "We believe in the moral perfection of God " While the Calvinists "take from us our father in heaven, and substitute for him a being, whom we cannot love if we would, and whom we ought not to love if we could the Unitarians believe "in his parental character . . . We believe that he has a father's concern for his creatures . . . We look upon this world as a place of education, in which he is training men . . . by a various discipline suited to free and moral beings, for union with himself, and for a sublime and ever-growing virtue in heaven " "Among the virtues we give first place to the love of God," and "the true love of God is a moral sentiment, founded on a clear perception, and consisting in a high esteem and veneration, of his moral perfections . . . Thus it perfectly coincides, and is in fact the same thing, with the love of virtue, rectitude and goodness "

Finally he ended this epochal sermon as John Robinson had ended his exactly two hundred years before "Christianity cannot have freed itself from all the human inventions which disfigured it under the papal tyranny No Much stubble is yet to be burnt, much rubbish to be removed, many gaudy decorations, which a false taste has hung around Christianity must be swept away " He also echoed Roger Williams' Seekerism "To all who hear me, I would say, with the apostle,—'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good ' Do not, brethren, shrink from the duty of searching God's word for yourselves, through fear of human censure and denunciation " When Emerso and Parker did not shrink from doing this, Channing did not shrink from them. "

³⁴ Quoted by Brooks 154

³⁵ *Finn* 219 Chadwick, 182-183, 249, 373

Robinson prophesied that "more truth and light" would "break forth out of [God's] holy word," and two centuries later Channing based his new doctrines on the Scriptures "Thereby, not a Scriptural but a Pilgrim prophecy was fulfilled

4

In 1825, the American Unitarian Association was founded in Boston Channing was the choice for its first president, but he declined He had regretted that the acrimony of the orthodox had forced the Unitarians to leave the Congregational Church and set up an organization of their own," and his regret that the new liberal movement must organize as a sect was, along with poor health, his reason for refusing to head the organization

From time to time throughout his life he expressed regret over sectarianism As early as 1811 he wrote that the true church consists of "Christ's friends and followers who truly imbibe his spirit, no matter by what name they are called, in what houses they worship, by what peculiarities of mode and opinion they are distinguished, under what sky they live, or what language they speak " " In 1841, he declared, "We must shun the spirit of sectarianism as from hell We must shudder at the thought of shutting up God in any denomination We must think no man the better for belonging to our communion, no man the worse for belonging to another " "The grand error of Roman Catholicism is its narrow church spirit, its blind sectarianism, its exclusion of virtuous, pious men from God's favor because they cannot eat, drink, or pray according to certain prescribed rites Romanism has to learn that nothing but the inward life is great and good in the sight of the Omniscient, and that all who cherish this are members

³⁶ Brooks, 176 Chadwick, 226

³⁷ Sunderland, 20

³⁸ Quoted by Chadwick, 81

of Christ's body Romanism is anything but what it boasts to be, the universal church I am too much a Catholic to enlist under its banner " " In another sermon, he said, "I wish to regard myself as belonging, not to a sect, but to the community of free minds, of lovers of truth, of followers of Christ, both on earth and in heaven I desire to escape the narrow walls of a particular church, and to live under the open sky " "

He admitted sadly that Unitarianism had developed an orthodoxy of its own, " and in 1841 he wrote, "I have little or no interest in Unitarians as a sect I have hardly anything to do with them I can endure no sectarian bonds " Again, "I am little of a Unitarian and stand aloof from all but those who strive and pray for clearer light, who look for a clearer and more effectual manifestation of Christian truth " " In his last public address, speaking on the emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies, he took care to deny partisan affiliation, declaring, "I stand alone, I speak in the name of no party " " Addison did not overstate the point when he wrote in his volume entitled "The Clergy in American Life and Letters," that Channing's "individualism was so extreme that he put more confidence in truth as expressed by the individual than by associations of individuals " "

As the leading Unitarian minister in America, he was given another opportunity to sound the keynote of Unitarianism when he preached the sermon at the dedication of the Second Congregational Unitarian Church in New York, in 1826 This sermon, entitled "Unitarian Christianity Most

⁴⁹ *Works* (1886), 118

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 247

⁵¹ Fenn, 216

⁵² Quoted by Brooks, 158

⁴³ *Works* (1886), 909

⁴⁴ Addison, Daniel D. *The Clergy in American Life and Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1900) 203

Favorable to Piety," "ranks second in importance among his utterances. In the introduction to the sermon he broached the subject of sectarianism, saying that "we dare not say that we are in no degree influenced by sectarian feeling; for we see it raging around us. We do hope, however, that our main purpose and aim is not sectarian, but to promote a purer and nobler piety than now prevails." As for particular religious edifices, "We do not suppose that, in consequence of rites now performed, the worship offered here will be more acceptable than prayer offered in the closet, or breathed from the soul in the midst of business, or that the instructions delivered from this pulpit will be more effectual than if they were uttered in a private dwelling or in the open air."

He proceeded to explain that Unitarian Christianity is most favorable to piety because it believes in a monotheistic and not a polytheistic God, in a spiritual rather than a physical and material God, in a paternal rather than tyrannical God, in a perfect rather than an anthropomorphic God. Unitarianism accords with nature, sets no bounds to progressive concepts of God, stresses the goodness of Jesus, believes in a God who is merciful to sinners, and upholds the application of reason to religion. The most striking thing in this sermon, or for that matter in any of his sermons, was his reference to the Calvinistic belief that "the Creator, in order to pardon his own children, had erected a gallows in the center of the universe, and had publicly executed upon it, in room of the offenders, an infinite Being, the partaker of his own Supreme Divinity." Never before or since did he speak so sharply as this ".

5

Although the Baltimore and New York sermons were the most important, historically, that he preached, from time to

⁴¹ *Works* (1886), 384-398

⁴⁶ *Works* (1886), 384-398

time throughout his ministry he presented principles and doctrines which became parts of Unitarianism. His biographer, John W. Chadwick, wrote that by liberal Christianity Channing meant not "a Christianity which put a liberal interpretation on a creed, but a Christianity which is liberal, kindly, gentle and considerate in its judgments of those differing from it."

Freedom of speech and thought was one of Channing's strongest principles, and his greatest objection to making Unitarianism a sect was his fear that liberalism would crystallize. As early as when he graduated from Harvard in 1798, he refused to give his Commencement oration until the faculty gave him the privilege of saying what he wanted to.¹⁸ When his fellow minister John Pierpont, of the Hollis Street Society in Boston, was almost ousted by his parishioners for preaching against whiskey distilling, he encouraged him in his bold stand.¹⁹

But the most astonishing example of his insistence on tolerance and free discussion occurred when he headed a petition to the governor of Massachusetts protesting the prosecution of an atheist for his opinion.²⁰ He himself may not have written the preamble to the petition, but he must have fully endorsed it. Some of the reasons offered by the petitioners for their opposition to prosecution have an interesting psychological basis, while all of them show exceptional vision. "Because the freedom of speech and of the press is the chief instrument of the progress of truth and of social improvements, . . . Because, if opinion is to be subjected to penalties, it is impossible to determine where punishment shall stop,

Because truth essential to the existence of society must

¹⁸ Chadwick, 157.

¹⁹ Addison, 196.

²⁰ Channing, William Henry, *Life of William Ellery Channing* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1880), 707-508.

²¹ Chadwick, 341-346.

be so palpable as to need no protection from the magistrate,

Because religion needs no support from penal law," "reason and persuasion" being its support, "Because, by punishing infidel opinions," we imply that religion cannot survive attack and investigation, "Because error of opinion is never so dangerous as when goaded into fanaticism by persecution

, Because the influence of hurtful doctrines is often propagated by sympathy which legal severities awaken, .

Because we are unwilling that" an atheist should "be exalted into a martyr, Because we are unwilling that [Massachusetts] should be exposed to reproach, as clinging obstinately to illiberal principles, which the most enlightened minds have exploded " " In the spirit of this appeal, he wrote regarding radical religious movements that "nothing terrifies me in these wildest movements What has for years terrified and discouraged me is apathy " "

6

His key principle, the one on which he placed most emphasis, was that religion is the striving of the human soul for character, even for perfection, and finally for oneness with God " He stressed this many times, and his objection to orthodoxy was not only its doctrine of the Trinity but also its attitude toward the qualities of God and the nature of true virtue " He objected less to its concepts of Jesus as God than he did to its concept of God as devil and man as sinner He wrote, for instance, "That the Infinite Father should ordain sea-bathing as a condition or means of spiritual communication, is so improbable " " "The great controversies in the church may be resolved into one question,—Is God,

⁴ W. H. Channing, 503-506

⁵ Quoted by Chadwick, 352

⁶ *Ibid.*, 224, 242, 257

⁷ Addison, 202 Sunderland, 16-18 Chadwick, 251, 63 Fenn, 214

⁸ Quoted by Chadwick, 402

indeed, perfectly good? To my mind, most of the prevalent theories of religion rest on the supposition that he is not good, that his government is dreadfully severe, and that it is the greatest of evils to receive existence from his hand " "

Although at first he had considered man a debased sinner, " he came to object even to the use of the word "masses" as "an odious word, as if spiritual beings could be lumped together like heaps of matter " " In his address, in 1835, on "The Ministry for the Poor," he declared, "Words cannot exaggerate the worth of the soul We have all felt, when looking above us into the atmosphere, that there was an infinity of space which we could not explore When I look into man's spirit, and see there the germs of an immortal life, I feel more deeply that an infinity lies hid behind what I see In the idea of duty, which springs up in every human heart, I discern a law more sacred and boundless than gravitation, which binds the soul to a more glorious universe than that to which attraction binds the body, and which is to endure though the laws of physical nature pass away Every moral sentiment, every intellectual action, is to me a hint, a prophetic sign, of a spiritual power to be expanded forever, just as a faint ray from a distant star is significant of unimaginable splendor " " Dean Fenn of the Harvard Divinity School wrote, in connection with Channing, that "the fundamental difference between Trinitarians and Unitarians was not on the nature of Christ, but on the nature of man " " And, he might have added, on the nature of God and of true virtue

His religious emphasis was always upon ethics rather than upon theology He once defined religion as "the perfection of morality " " In his "Remarks on Associations," he

⁵⁶ Quoted by Brooks, 113

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 105

⁵⁸ Quoted by W. H. Channing, 514

⁵⁹ *Works* (1886) 83

⁶⁰ Fenn, 213

⁶¹ Quoted by Chadwick, 241

said in 1829, "An individual who thinks that he is doing a more religious act in contributing to a missionary society than in doing a needful act of kindness to a relative, friend or neighbor, is leaving a society of God's institution for one of man's making" ⁶² In his sermon entitled "Perfect Life the End of Christianity," he declared that "excellence of character is the great object of Christianity, is the great blessing which Christ came to communicate" ⁶³ "The adoration of goodness—this is religion", "love of Christ is but another name for the love of virtue" ⁶⁴ In his first sermon, he declared that "we glorify God when by imitation we display his character" ⁶⁵ Another time he wrote that "there is but one object of cherished and enduring love in heaven and on earth, and that is moral goodness" ⁶⁶ Again, "The religious principle in human nature is the desire to establish relations with a Being more perfect than itself" ⁶⁷ In his sermon entitled "The Essence of the Christian Religion," he declared, "I believe that Christianity has one great principle which is central, around which all its truths gather, and which constitutes it the glorious gospel of the blessed God It is the doctrine that God purposes, in his unbounded fatherly love, to perfect the human soul, to purify it from all sin, to fill it with his own spirit, to unfold it forever" "Perfection of mind is our only happiness" "No other heaven, than that which is found in our own perfection, would be worth living for" ⁶⁸

7

The third period of his career was the culmination of the previous two periods In his earliest period, he de-Calvinized

⁶² *Works* (1886), 146-147

⁶³ *Ibid*, 1007, 1009

⁶⁴ Quoted by Brooks, 108

⁶⁵ Quoted by Chadwick, 257

⁶⁶ Quoted in *ibid*, p 242

⁶⁷ *Works* (1886), 1001-1003

theology and then emphasized ethics at the expense of theology, in his second period, he reformed his theology to fit his ethics, and in his final period he fused the new ethics and theology into a humanitarian philosophy of life

Chadwick wrote that "all his social aspirations,—for improving the conditions of the poor, for elevating the laboring classes, for universal education, for the emancipation of the slave, for the wiser treatment of criminals, for the cure of intemperance, for the abatement of money-worship and the partisan spirit,—all went back into his consciousness of human brotherhood, and their roots upon his 'one sublime idea' of the greatness of the human soul" His consciousness of human brotherhood, in turn, was based upon his concept of God as a father rather than a judge " He made organized religion ethical rather than theological, but he did not do much to make it practicable rather than theoretical Yet before Channing was born, Franklin had already succeeded in making his own personal liberal and ethical religion eminently practicable

In the last year of his life he wrote to a friend, "It is only from a sense of duty that I read a narrative of grief and woe in the papers When the darkness, indeed is lifted up by moral greatness or beauty, I can endure, or even enjoy it You see I am made of but poor material for a reformer" " In his essay on "Slavery," he wrote, "We, indeed, need zeal,—fervent zeal,—such as will fear no man's power, and shrink before no man's frown,—such as will sacrifice life to truth and freedom But this energy of will ought to be joined with deliberate wisdom and universal charity" "One great principle, which we should lay down as immovably true, is, that if a good work cannot be carried on by the calm, self-controlled, benevolent spirit of Christianity, then the time for doing it has not come God asks not the aid of our vices "

⁸ Chadwick, 445

⁹ Quoted by W. H. Channing, 156-457

"We should desire virtue more than success [even in reform] If by one wrong deed we could accomplish the liberation of millions, and in no other way, we ought to feel that this good, for which, perhaps, we have prayed with an agony of desire, was denied us by God, was reserved for other times and other hands" ⁷⁰

That disposed of John Brown and other incendiaries, and at the same time it offers comfort to weak and timid souls who may henceforth be content merely to pray in the face of obstacles. In 1841, he wrote, "We are better reformers, —because calmer and wiser, because we have more weapons to work with,— if we give a wide range to thought, imagination, taste, and the affections. We must be cheerful, too, in our war with evil, for gloom is apt to become sullenness, ill-humor, and bitterness" ⁷¹. This sounds like an armchair philosopher indulging in a kind of vicarious stoicism. Had he taken the trouble to inform himself about the conditions surrounding child labor in mills and factories, and the rate of remuneration for it, he could not have written about remaining calm and cheerful. His humanitarianism was too often mere talk. A humanitarian may be described as one who tries to stop man's inhumanity to man, who tries to elevate to a human level those who have been brutalized either by themselves or others. This cannot be done merely by preaching— unless, perhaps, if the preaching is done in a forceful manner to the oppressors, rather than to the oppressed.

It is true that in 1824 he formed the "Association of the Members of the Federal Street Society for Benevolent Purposes," that he was instrumental in organizing in 1822 the "Wednesday Evening Association" which organized a "Ministry at Large" to improve the housing of the poor, and that he supported the Methodist Father Taylor's "Seaman's Aid

⁷⁰ *Works* (1886), 734

⁷¹ Quoted by W. H. Channing, 456-457

Society," " but a more typical action was his refusal to join temperance societies because of his "dread of the tyranny incident to associated action " " He preferred to fight intemperance through physical and intellectual education of the laboring classes " "

8

He also was instrumental in forming the Peace Society of Massachusetts, which was organized in his home in 1816 as a result of one of his sermons on war, " but he was not a non-resistant " His moderation appeared to better advantage in his attitude toward war than in his attitude regarding other social questions

He declared in 1839, in his "Lecture on War," that "the citizen, before fighting, is bound to inquire into the justice of the cause which he is called to maintain with blood, and bound to withhold his hand if his conscience condemn the cause " If, as a consequence, "martial law seize on him, let him submit If hurried to prison, let him submit If brought thence to be shot, let him submit There must be martyrs to peace as well as to other principles of our religion " "

In 1829 he wrote, "I abhor war , but the view of its 'absolute unlawfulness,' I cannot accede to War is not absolutely, or in all possible cases, a crime " But "the whole system of war, as it now exists, is abominable The profession of a soldier, according to this system, is immoral, and most actual wars are unjust, so that a philanthropist and Christian should die sooner than engage in them " "

¹ *Ibid* , 465, 487

² Quoted in *ibid* , 474 See *Works* (1886), 734-735

³ *Ibid* 474-475

⁴ Chadwick, 209

⁵ *Works* V 116-117

⁶ *Works* (1886), 676-677

⁷ Quoted by W. H. Channing, 466-467

He perceived that war is abominable, not only for the suffering which it causes but also for its hardening effect "War organizes a body of men who lose the feelings of the citizen in the soldier, whose habits detach them from the community, whose ruling passion is devotion to a chief; who are inured in the camp to despotic sway, who are accustomed to accomplish their ends by force, and to sport with the rights and happiness of their fellow-beings, who delight in tumult, adventure, and peril, and turn with disgust and scorn from the quiet labors of peace" Moreover, it leads not only soldiers as a group, but the government itself, away from democracy and toward dictatorship "It arms government with a dangerous patronage, multiplies dependents and instruments of oppression, and generates a power which, in the hands of the energetic and aspiring, endangers a free constitution" "

He believed that war is justified only when it is undertaken in self-defense or in rescuing the oppressed War is "a tremendous evil, but national subjugation is a greater evil than a war of defense" " Rescuing the oppressed has often been a cloak for imperialism, as in the war with Spain in which we acquired Cuba and the Philippines But Channing meant what he said, and it is probable that if he had lived to witness the war with Mexico in 1846 he would not have justified it as a war to make southwestern North America safe for democracy In fact, he made a strong and interesting attack on expansionism in the southwest, and he considered that it would be unconstitutional to annex Texas " As early as 1837, in a public letter addressed to Secretary of State Henry Clay, he wrote that the annexation of "Texas is the first step to Mexico" "

⁷⁹ *Works* (1886), 645

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 648-649, 676-677

⁸¹ *Works*, VI, 349-354

⁸² *Works* (1886), 761

He perceived not only that war is often prompted by imperialism but also that it entails internal tyranny. In 1812 he said, "The cry has been that war is declared, and all opposition should therefore be hushed. A sentiment more unworthy of a free country can hardly be propagated. Admit this doctrine, let rulers once know that, by placing the country in a state of war, they place themselves beyond the only power they dread,—the power of free discussion,—and we may expect war without end." "In war, then, as in peace, assert the freedom of speech and of the press. Cling to this as the bulwark of all your rights and privileges." "However, it should be noted that this keen vision was due to his strong Federalist political opinion; the New England Federalists bitterly opposed the War of 1812, not merely because they were pacifists, but because ensuing additions of territory would lessen their relative importance in the federal government."

He was a realist when it came to considering ways of avoiding war. "Non-intercourse might and should be substituted for war, but the question arises, whether in the present state of the world it can be carried out. The merchants of both countries would, to a man, employ all their ingenuity in eluding it." "In the face of commercial greed, he urged as perhaps a more practical measure, the arbitration of disputes."

9

His moderation in his opposition to slavery seems weak and timid, at least in comparison to Parker's ferocity. James Freeman Clarke wrote that Channing told him that "the wish of his life had been to write a work which should embody his views on the philosophy of man and on general theology, 'but,'

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 682-688

⁸¹ Pratt, J. W., *Expansionists of 1812* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 131-4

⁸² Quoted by W. H. Channing, 470

said he, "the cause of freedom demands all the little strength I have I shall never be able, I foresee, to do the work which I had hoped was to be the work of my life" ⁸⁶ This was a great sacrifice for a scholar to make, but he did not follow it up with action In his last public address he said "I deprecate all political action on slavery except for one end, and this end is to release the free states from all connection with this oppressive institution, to sever slavery wholly from the national government, to make it exclusively the concern of the states in which it exists For this end memorials should be poured in upon congress " "I recommend no crusade against slavery, no use of physical or legislative power for its destruction, no irruption into the south to tamper with the slave, or to repeal or resist the laws The North has but one weapon,—moral force, the utterance of moral judgment, moral feeling, and religious conviction" ⁸⁷ He suggested as a remedy for the evil of slavery, the gradual emancipation of the slaves, ⁸⁸ but he said that the abolition movement with its extremism really retarded the solution of the problem because it "made converts of individuals, but alienated multitudes It has stirred up bitter passions and a fierce fanaticism, which has shut every ear and every heart against its arguments and persuasions" ⁸⁹ In spite of his moderation, however, he was sometimes snubbed publicly by his parishioners because he voiced disapproval of slavery ⁹⁰

Judging them on their attitudes towards abolition, Channing was a more consistent pacifist than the gentle Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, who waxed militant, not to say treasonous, regarding abolition, and blessed the orgy of the Civil War in the deluded belief that it was a war to make

⁸⁶ Clarke, James Freeman, *Memorial and Biographical Sketches* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1878), 162

⁸⁷ *Works* (1886), 921-923

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 808

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 735

⁹⁰ Chadwick, 294, 411-412

America safe for democracy Even Channing, however, probably would not have perceived that the war was really a struggle for power between two plutocracies—the slave plutocracy of the South and the financial and industrial plutocracy of the North.”

Although at a hearing in the Massachusetts State House he is said to have taken the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison by the hand,” his opposition to slavery was so purely verbal that when Garrison wrote of him in kindly vein after his death, he declared in an editorial in *The Liberator*, “For twelve years he saw me struggling against all that was evil in the land,—in a cause worthy of universal acclaim,—with fidelity and an unfaltering spirit, but during all that time he never conveyed to me, directly or indirectly, a word of cheer or a whisper of encouragement.”” What about the State House incident? Regardless of that, there must have been basis for Garrison’s statement. He wrote to Channing more than once, but Channing never replied. Channing was invited by mutual friends to meet Garrison, but he stayed away.” Channing’s well-balanced mind and emphasis upon moderation, which made his stand unsatisfactory to both the conservatives and the radicals, may be praised. But

10

He talked a great deal about what he termed, rather patronizingly, the laboring classes. His attitude toward the word “masses,” however, showed no condescension. He was more concerned about their spiritual and moral development than about their physical well-being, and he seemed to think that their misery was more their own fault than the fault of their employers.

⁹¹ Beard, Charles A. and Mary R., *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), II, 51-54.

⁹² Chadwick, 287-289.

⁹³ *Liberator*, XVIII, 82. Quoted by Chadwick, 428.

⁹⁴ Chadwick, 287-289.

In his last public address, he asked his audience, "Suppose the nobleman should say to the half-starved, ragged operative of Manchester, 'I will give up my horse, and feed and clothe you with like sumptuousness, on condition that I may mount you daily with lash and spurs, and sell you when I can make a profitable bargain' Would you have the operative, for the sake of good fare and clothes, take the lot of the brute? or, in other words, become a slave?"⁹¹ He was imposed upon by mere words. He did not see that the worker is a slave to the employer, without even the old-age security of the negro slave, that he is brutalized, because his employers do not treat him as humanely as they would treat a carriage horse, that he is figuratively mounted, lashed and spurred in a more deadly way than if it were done literally, and that the operative's only freedom is to starve, if he does not submit to the demands of his employers. In the same address he continued, "I do not stop to ask if the emancipated [slaves in the British West Indies] are better fed and clothed than formerly. They are free, and that one word contains a world of good, unknown to the most pampered slave."⁹² He did not perceive that freedom is a means and not an end, and that the end is physical and spiritual well being.

He early declared, in connection with the ascetic life he forced himself to live in Richmond, that "the wants of the body are few", "mind, mind, requires all our care."⁹³ But his resulting physical debility and permanently injured health should have knocked that notion out of his head. Nevertheless, he wrote later, "To me the matter of complaint is, not that the laboring classes want physical comforts—though I wish these to be earned by fewer hours of labor,—but that they live only for their physical nature."⁹⁴ He

⁹¹ *Works* (1886), 911

⁹² *Ibid.*, 916

⁹³ Quoted by Chadwick, 52-53

⁹⁴ Quoted by W. H. Channing, 514

was disappointingly like the preachers to whom the Communist coal-miners referred in a song quoted by Lauren Gilfillan in her book entitled "I Went to Pit College"

"Long-haired preachers come out every night,
Tell us what's wrong and what's right
But if you ask them for something to eat,
They answer in voices so sweet

'You'll eat by and by
In that glorious land above the sky,
Up so high
You'll get pie'
(That's a lie)'" "

The nearest that he came to appreciating the situation of the workers was in his essay "On the Education of the People, and Especially of the Laboring Classes," written in 1837 "A man half fed, half clothed, and fearing to perish from famine or cold, will be too crushed in spirit to do the proper work of a man. He must be set free from the iron grasp of want, from the constant pressure of painful sensations, from grinding, ill-requited toil" ⁹⁹ Even here, however, he is concerned with the greater efficiency of the worker in order "to do the proper work of a man," rather than with fuller life for the worker

In making a proposal regarding the education of children who were employed, he went on to say that education of the children "will be beneficial to the proprietors of manufactories. They will also be able to obtain children on more favorable terms [still lower wages?], in proportion as parents shall lose their fear of the corrupting influence of manufacturing establishments." Whether this callousness was mere bait to win over manufacturers or was his own attitude may not be certain, but the latter seems more probable. Perhaps

⁹⁹ Gilfillan, Lauren, *I Went to Pit College* (New York: Viking Press, 1934), 27

¹⁰⁰ Quoted by W. H. Channing, 488

he did not know how bad conditions were, although, as a minister, it should have been his business to know. He began this report by "passing the buck", saying that the Boston Association of Ministers had "addressed a circular letter to several ministers, within whose parishes manufactories are established. The answers to this circular have not been as numerous and definite as hoped."¹⁰¹

At times, his ideal of education was that it should become practical rather than merely moral. He was enthusiastic about Horace Mann's educational experiments, and as early as 1837 he advocated "manual labor schools" for those who must work.¹⁰² He suggested that the curriculum of Harvard College should be made modern, with less emphasis on languages and more on history, economics and political science.¹⁰³ This was at a time when even history, to say nothing of economics and political science, was scarcely taught in America.

11

It would be misleading to represent him as wholly uninterested in the physical welfare of the poor even though he did little to improve it. In his address on "Ministry for the Poor," he warned, "We must not neglect their bodies under pretence of caring for their souls, nor must we, on the other hand, imagine that, in providing for their outward wants, we have acquitted ourselves of all Christian obligations."¹⁰⁴ He wrote that "what are called the 'better classes' are always selfishly timid, and never originate improvements worthy of the name."¹⁰⁵ He had read with admiration Rousseau, Godwin on "Political Justice," and Mary Wollstonecraft on "The Rights of Women." In 1841, he wrote to the planners

¹⁰¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 490-491

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 487-489

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 495-498

¹⁰⁴ *Works* (1886), 83

¹⁰⁵ Quoted by Chadwick, 321, 379, 405

of a communistic community, "I earnestly desire to witness some change, by which the mass of men may be released from their present anxious drudgery, . . . and may so combine labor with a system of improvement that they will find in it a help, not a degrading burden. I have for a long time dreamed of an association, in which the members, instead of preying on one another, . . . should live together as brothers. But the materials for such a community I have not seen." He pointed out the danger that communism would destroy individual ambition and initiative, domestic ties, free thought, expansive self-development.¹⁰⁶

In 1830, when revolutions swept over part of Europe, he upbraided a Harvard student for the lack of interest shown by young men in these conflicts.¹⁰⁷ In his sermon on "The Essence of the Christian Religion," he said that he rejoiced in "the revolutionary spirit of our times," for he saw in it "the promise of a freer and higher action of the human mind,—the pledge of a state of society more fit to perfect human beings."¹⁰⁸ He was interested here in political rather than economic change.

He wrote that the laboring classes "must share more largely in the fruits of their toil, and in means of improvement. How this is to be accomplished, is a problem which always exercises my mind. I wish I could see the way growing clearer."¹⁰⁹ He regretted that "our present civilization" "tends to increase the amount of manual toil at the very time that it renders this toil less favorable to the culture of the mind. The division of labor, which distinguishes civilized from savage life, and to which we owe chiefly the perfection of the arts, tends to dwarf the intellectual powers, by confining the activity of the individual to a narrow range, to a

¹⁰⁶ W. H. Channing, 511-513

¹⁰⁷ Fenn, 185

¹⁰⁸ *Works* (1886), 1005

¹⁰⁹ Quoted by W. H. Channing, 518

few details, perhaps to the heading of pins, the pointing of nails, or the tying together of broken strings, so that while the savage has his faculties sharpened by various occupations, and by exposure to various perils, the civilized man treads a monotonous, stupefying round of unthinking toil. This cannot, must not, always be. Variety of action, corresponding to the variety of human powers, and fitted to develop all, is the most important element of human civilization. It should be the aim of philanthropists. In proportion as Christianity shall spread the spirit of brotherhood, there will and must be a more equal distribution of toils and means of improvement " " "

"The first object of society is to give incitements and means of progress to all its members", " " "the grand end of society is, to place within reach of all its members the means of improvement, of elevation, of the true happiness of man. There is a higher duty than to build almshouses for the poor, and that is, to save men from being degraded to the blighting influence of an almshouse. Man has a right to something more than bread to keep him from starving. He has a right to the aids and encouragements and culture by which he may fulfil the destiny of a man, and until society is brought to recognize and reverence this, it will continue to groan under its present miseries " " " He regretted that "Society has not gone forward as a whole", "the elevation of one part of the community has been accompanied with the depression of another " Near the mansions of the wealthy, "you may meet a half-civilized horde, given up to deeper degradation than the inhabitants of the wilderness " " " He wrote that "no man has a right to seek property in order that he may enjoy . . . a life of indulgence, may throw all toil on another class of

¹¹⁰ *Works* (1886), 39-40

¹¹¹ *Ibid* , 37

¹¹² *Works*, VI, 331

¹¹³ *Works* (1886), 91-92

society " " " "I would like to have our private dwellings simple, but our public edifices magnificent models of taste, and ornaments to the city I would have a public gallery freely open We should not keep pictures at home, or more than one, perhaps, and the rest should be for the community The way to be comfortable here is to live simply " " "

He lamented in 1835, "The cry is, 'Property is insecure, law is a rope of sand, and the mob sovereign' The actual evil,—the evil of that worship of property, which stifles all the nobler sentiments, and makes man property,—this nobody sees, but appearances of approaching convulsions of property,—these shake the nerves of men, who are willing that our moral evils should be perpetuated to the end of time, provided their treasures be untouched I have no fear of revolutions What exists troubles me more than what is to come " " " In the last year of his life he exclaimed, "Thousands and tens of thousands starving [in England] in the sight of luxury and ostentation! Does the earth show a sadder sight than this? England seems to be teaching one great lesson, namely, that art and science, skill and energy, and all the forces of nature, concentrated by selfishness for the accumulation of wealth, produce degradation and misery " " " The thing that he liked about the Virginians, when he tutored in Virginia, even though he lamented their dependence on slavery, was that they talked and thought less about money than did the Yankees " "

12

He once wrote of himself, "I sit in my study and shed tears over human misery I weep over a novel I weep over

¹¹¹ Quoted by W. H. Channing, 510

¹¹⁵ Quoted by Chadwick, 495

¹¹⁶ Quoted by W. H. Channing, 509

¹¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.* 518

¹¹⁸ Chadwick, 45

a tale of human woe. But do I ever relieve the distressed? Have I lightened the load of affliction? I found that virtue did not consist in feeling, but in acting from a sense of duty " " "

Theologian and preacher that he was, he found out the nature of true virtue, but he did not find virtue in himself. It was something, however, to find out even the nature of virtue. A theologian by training and inclination, an aristocrat by both heredity and environment, a moderate in character and disposition, he was incapacitated for social action—and at times he felt frustration. His French critic, Lavallee, praised him more highly than he would praise himself or than we can praise him, when he wrote, "How can anyone help loving, in Channing, the defender of all the oppressed, the advocate of all the miserable, the truly Christian apostle, consecrating his energies and his life to the emancipation of the negro, to the spread of popular education?" " " To say this of him is to praise rather what he should have done instead of what he did, his potentialities and not his achievements. Even farther from the truth is the recent French writer, Régis Michaud, who wrote, in his biography of Emerson, that for Channing "the theological virtues, asceticism and perfection, did not exist, there were only altruism, munificence, civic virtue, honesty in business. We are tempted to see in him merely the Babbitt of the Christian pulpit " " " Emerson's typical doctrine of "Self-Reliance" offered much more justification for the American "Babbitt" than did Channing's ascetic doctrine and practice of "Self-Denial " " "

On the other hand, the hostile criticism of the famous English critic and writer, William Hazlitt, is, in another way,

¹¹⁹ Quoted by Brooks, 74

¹²⁰ Quoted by Chadwick, 435-436

¹²¹ Michaud, Régis, *Emerson: The Enraptured Yankee* (New York: Harper, 1930), 56

¹²² See two sermons with this title, *Works* (1886), 336-346

and in its intent, as far from the truth "He keeps an eye on both worlds, kisses his hands to the reading public all around, and does his best to stand well with different sects and parties " ¹²⁴ The moderate are always attacked for their lack of extremism by the ardent, and Hazlitt unconsciously paid a tribute to Channing's kindliness and restraint

He was liberal in theology, as opposed on the one hand, to conservative Calvinistic orthodoxy and on the other hand, to radical heretics like Emerson and Parker He was liberal in regard to the great public questions of his day, as opposed on the one hand, to the conservative exponents of slavery and capitalism and on the other hand, to the radical abolitionists and communists He was not only liberal in attitude but progressive in spirit, championing freedom of thought and speech even for an atheist, and writing sympathetically to schemers of communistic Utopias As a theologian he is now out of date, and as a humanitarian he was a man of words rather than of action He lacked the virtues of a reformer, but he helped reform Calvinism and he exemplified the virtues of moderation, tolerance and open-mindedness in all his contacts with his fellow-men

¹²⁴ Quoted by Chadwick, 201

X

RALPH WALDO EMERSON THE NOBLEST AMERICAN

1

EMERSON wrote in his essay entitled "Self-Reliance" that "an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man,"¹ but so far from founding one, he severed himself even from the institution in which he made his living. He resigned his pulpit and withdrew from the Unitarian Church at the outset of his career, because even Unitarianism was too institutionalized for him, however, like Channing, he remained a preacher and a man of words rather than a man of action.

But never were there words which were more stimulating and inspiring for action! Emerson's friend, the great Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle, was known as "the great awakener," and Emerson equally deserves the reputation. Indeed, Thomas Huxley, the English scientist and writer, called both Carlyle and Emerson "great Tonics." Regis Michaud subtitled his recent biography of Emerson, "The Enraptured Yankee."² To many, he is also the enrapturing Yankee.

Although he was a man of words, he admired action. Among his heroes, Napoleon stood high, and his essay entitled "Power", in his volume entitled "The Conduct of Life", exhibited an almost Nietzschean regard for power.³ In his

¹ Emerson, *Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1883, 12 vols.), II, 62.

² Michaud, Regis, *Emerson: The Enraptured Yankee* (New York: Harper, 1930).

³ *Ibid.*, 350. Russell, Phillips, *Emerson: The Wissest American* (New York: Brentano, 1929), 89.

journal he recorded his vain struggle with a calf and how his Irish servant girl put her finger in its mouth and led it to the stall, Emerson writing, "I like people who can do things" ⁴ Like Walt Whitman, he admired the vigorousness of his Adirondack guides, ⁵ of farmers and laborers, ⁶ of the West Point cadets, ⁷ and he reminds us of Oscar Wilde in liking to talk with drivers and stable-men ⁸

Yet his recent biographer, Phillips Russell, well pointed out that he emphasized "Being rather than Doing. He saw that a nervous, restless people, like his countrymen, were suffering because of their overweening devotion to Action. He hoped to offset this malady by inculcating something of that quietism which he had learned from the Oriental scriptures, and to which he had been already bent, not only by Plato and the Neo-Platonists, but by the tendencies of his own nature. *Be more and Do less*, is a tenet implicit in virtually all of [his] writings, and is one which explains his own character" ⁹

In spite of the continual moral emphasis in his writings, which marks him as fundamentally a Puritan, he had none of the officiousness popularly associated with Puritanism. Wrote President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard, in his essay on Emerson in his volume entitled "Four American Leaders," "Although a prophet and inspirer of reform, Emerson was not a reformer. He was but a halting supporter of the reforms of his day. His visions were far-reaching, his doctrine often radical, and his exhortations fervid, but when it came to action, particularly to habitual action, he was surprisingly conservative. He laid down principles which, when applied, would inevitably lead to progress and reform,

⁴ Emerson *Journals* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1910-1914), IX, 421.

⁵ Brooks Van Wyck, *Life of Emerson* (New York: Literary Guild, 1932), 27.

⁶ *Ibid.* 280.

⁷ *Ibid.* 278.

⁸ *Ibid.* 291.

⁹ Russell, 299-300.

but he took little part in the step by step process of actual reforming " " Emerson himself wrote that "what we call our root-and-branch reforms, of slavery, war, gambling, intemperance, is only medicating the symptoms We must begin higher up—namely, in education " " This is not typically American, but it may be wisdom

It was not mere timidity which restrained him from action He dared to counsel treason when he wrote, "Every actual state is corrupt Good men will not obey the laws too well " " He committed treason when he broke the Fugitive Slave Law, and in the face of mobs in Boston, declared that the militant John Brown would "make the gallows glorious like the cross " " It was not mere expediency which caused his quietism

Aside from his quietism, he was distinctly American, Puritan, Yankee He was born in the parsonage of the First Church in Boston in 1803, a descendant of seven generations of Congregational ministers, and son of the Unitarian minister of the First Church Educated at Harvard College and the Harvard Divinity School, he became minister of the Second Unitarian Church of Boston in 1829, only to resign his pulpit in 1832 because he could not conscientiously administer the "Lord's Supper", even in the symbolic Unitarian manner ' "

That resignation was the most dramatic event of his life Paul Elmer More has pointed out that nearly a century before, in 1750, the arch-Calvinist, Jonathan Edwards, had been forced from his pulpit in the First Church in Northampton because he would administer the "Lord's Supper" only to those "who could give evidence of a true conversion", and Emerson's

¹⁰ Eliot, Charles W. *Four American Leaders* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1906), 80

¹¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 83

¹² *Works*, III, 199

¹³ Quoted by Sherman, Stuart Pratt, *Americans* (New York: Scribner, 1923), 71

¹⁴ Russell, 74, 84-86

act, "like that of Edwards, was the intrusion of unyielding consistency among those who were content to rest in habit and compromise " "

Except for three sojourns in Europe, one of which took him to Egypt, several series of lectures in lyceums as far west as Illinois and Wisconsin, a trip west to California, a series of lectures at Harvard in 1870, he spent the last fifty years of his life in Concord, dying there quietly in 1882 after a few years of lapsing memory and mentality

3

Except for marrying twice, his first wife quickly dying of consumption, siring four children, managing his small farm, traveling and lecturing, his great occupation was the writing of his journal and the resulting essays. He began it as a senior in Harvard in 1820 and continued it until his health failed. From it he drew his lectures and essays, after putting into it his thoughts as well as a record of what he read and did.

Paul Elmer More wrote that the journals were "self-communion, the poetry of the New England conscience deprived of its concrete deity and buoying itself on gleams and suggestions of eternal beauty and holiness." The essays "are but a repetition to the world of fragments of this long inner conversation " ". Since he culled his essays from here and there in the journals, they have a fragmentariness which has annoyed most critics. Norman Foerster, noted writer and critic, wrote that it is "hardly excessive to say that he was a master of no subject, since he never thought anything out, and of no literary form, since nearly all his essays and poems are series of sentences rather than wholes." But Foerster

¹⁵ More, Paul Elmer, *A New England Group (Shelburne Essays, XI)*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921), 79-80.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

quotes with approval Matthew Arnold's conclusion that, in spite of such grave weaknesses, Emerson's essays were "the most important work in English prose of the nineteenth century" "

More well pointed out in his essay on Emerson that his fragmentariness resulted not so much from the parts being "disjointed, as if made up of sentences jostled together like so many mutually repellent particles, as because from the manner of his composition Emerson often missed what is the essence of good rhetoric, that is to say the consciousness of his hearer's mind as well as of his own. We hear him as it were talking to himself, with no attempt to convince by argument or to enlighten by analysis" "

In a former essay on Emerson, More had already written that although "often capricious in expression and on the surface illogical, Emerson, more than almost any other writer of wide influence, displays that inner logic which springs from the constant insistence on one or two master ideas" "

4

These master ideas were at least hinted at in 1836 in his first published book which was entitled "Nature." The first paragraph of the book sounded a note which he repeated at every opportunity. "Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face, we through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?" There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship" "

¹⁷ Foerster, Norman, *American Criticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 52.

¹⁸ More, 73-74.

¹⁹ More, *Shelburne Essays* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1904), I, 73-74.

²⁰ *Works*, I, 9.

This book found a very small public, and two striking addresses which he gave a little later at Harvard turned out to be his real public debut. It is probably not too much to say that he single-handedly announced two American declarations of independence. In his Harvard Phi Beta Kappa Address in 1837, entitled "The American Scholar," Oliver Wendell Holmes declared that he gave forth "our intellectual declaration of independence,"²¹ and in his Harvard Divinity School Address of 1838 he presented the American declaration of spiritual independence.

In the address on "The American Scholar," however, he was not so much concerned that the scholar should be an American as that he be a man, not so concerned lest he be merely a transplanted Britisher as that he become a provincial American. "There is One Man,—present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty, and you must take the whole society to find the whole man. Man is not a farmer, or professor, or engineer, but he is all. In the divided or social state, these functions are parcelled out to individuals, each of whom aims to do his stint of the joint work, whilst each other performs his. The priest becomes a form, the attorney, a statute-book, the mechanic a machine, the sailor a rope of the ship." "In this distribution of functions, the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state, he is Man Thinking. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker, or, still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking."²² Rightly conceived, the scholar is "that man who must take up into himself all the ability of the [present] time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future."²³

²¹ Quoted by Mead, Edwin D., *The Influence of Emerson* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1903), 93.

²² *Works*, I, 84-86.

²³ *Ibid.*, I, 113.

In that address, he warned against the cramping of character and personality by the conventions of the present, and in his second great address, he warned against the cramping tradition of the past. In the Divinity School Address, he attacked traditional Christianity because it "has dwelt, it dwells, with noxious exaggeration about the person of Jesus. The soul knows no persons."²⁴ In his essay entitled "The Over-Soul," he wrote, "The faith that stands on authority is not faith. The reliance on authority measures the decline of religion, the withdrawal of the soul. The position men have given to Jesus now for many centuries of history is a position of authority. It characterizes themselves."²⁵

To him, Jesus seemed merely human, and the authority of his teachings rested on their truth rather than on his person. In the Divinity School Address, he went on to declare that Jesus did not come to proclaim his own special divinity but rather the divine element in human nature. "Alone in all history he estimated the greatness of man. He saw that God incarnates himself in man. He said in this jubilee of sublime emotion, 'I am divine. Through me, God acts, through me, speaks. Would you see God, see me, or see thee, when thou also thinkest as I now think!'"²⁶

The second point of attack was the orthodox belief, in which even Unitarians then shared, that inspiration and revelation were finished and complete. "Men have come to speak of the revelation as somewhat long ago given and done, as if God were dead."²⁷ "The stationariness of religion, the assumption that the age of inspiration is passed, that the Bible is closed, the fear of degrading the character of Jesus by representing him as a man,—indicate with sufficient clearness the falsehood of our theology. It is the office of a true teacher

²⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 129

²⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 276-277

²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 128

²⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 132

to show us that God is, not was, that he speaketh, not spake The true Christianity—a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man—is lost " " In his essay entitled "Self-Reliance," he wrote that if "a man claims to know and speak of God, and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old mouldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not Is the acorn better than the oak which is its fullness and completion? Whence then this worship of the past? Then centuries are conspirators against the sanity and majesty of the soul " "

He went on, in the Divinity School Address, that the "evils of the church that now is are manifest The question returns, What shall we do? I confess, all attempts to project and establish a Cultus with new rites and forms, seem to me vain Rather let the breath of new life be breathed by you through the forms already existing For if once you are alive, you shall find they shall become plastic and new The remedy to their deformity is first, soul, and second, soul, and evermore, soul " " Not organization, but just soul Emerson came not to organize or reorganize, not to build or even rebuild, but to upbuild He complained of organizers because they "think society wiser than their soul, and know not that one soul, and their soul, is wiser than the whole world " " In his essay on "Self-Reliance," he wrote similarly that it is "only as a man puts off from himself all external support, and stands alone, that I see him to be strong and to prevail He is weaker by every recruit to his banner Is not a man better than a town? " " "Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members " "

²⁸ *Ibid* , I, 142

²⁹ *Ibid* , II, 66

³⁰ *Ibid* , I, 147

³¹ *Ibid* , I, 142

³² *Ibid* , II, 87

³³ *Ibid* , II, 51

In the twentieth century, when his doctrine has become a part of the American heritage, we are inspired, but not surprised, at this teaching. It is surprising, on the other hand, to learn that this address raised a great fuss. Theodore Parker wrote that it "caused a great outcry, one shouting 'The Philistines be upon us' another, 'We be all dead men' while the majority cried out, 'Atheism'." The dean said, "That part of it—as I apprehend—which was not folly was downright atheism!" "It is thought chaos is coming back the world is coming to an end. Some seem to think the Christianity which has stood some storms will not be able to weather this gale, and that truth, after all my Lord Bacon has said, will have to give it up now. For my part, I see that the sun still shines, the rain rains, and the dogs bark, and I have great doubts whether Emerson will overthrow Christianity this time." "

5

It was individualism which is self-reliant because of personal relationship to the Infinite and in spite of relation to society which Emerson proclaimed, not only in these addresses but in his great essays, which were at first lectures on lyceum platforms. In his essay on "Self-Reliance," he wrote that "it is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion, it is easy in solitude to live after our own, but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude." "Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of our own mind." "

³⁴ Quoted by Frothingham, Octavius Brooks, *Theodore Parker* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1886), 107.

³⁵ *Works*, II, 55.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 51-52.

Moreover, he urged in the same essay that we be on guard not only against the tyranny of mob-conformity but also against that of consistency, lest we fall into a rut of our own making "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds

If you would be a man, speak what you think today in words as hard as cannon-balls, and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said today Ah, then, exclaim the aged ladies, you shall be sure to be misunderstood' Misunderstood' It is a right fool's word Is it so bad then to be misunderstood' Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh To be great is to be misunderstood'" "I shun father and mother and wife and brother, when my genius calls me I would write on the lintels of the door-post, *Whim* I hope it is somewhat better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation " "

So great was his emphasis on self-reliance that he said that he felt he was doing wrong to give to needy persons, their self-reliance would thereby be further diminished In the same essay, he wrote, "I confess with shame I sometimes succumb and give the dollar, [but] it is a wicked dollar which by and by I shall have the manhood to withhold " " On the other hand, property, as well as poverty, seemed to him to show a lack of self-reliance In the same essay he wrote that men "measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is But a cultivated man becomes ashamed of his property, ashamed of what he has, out of new respect for his being Especially he hates what he has, if he sees that it is accidental,—came to him by inheritance, or gift, or crime, then he feels that it does not belong to him, has

³⁷ *Ibid.* II, 58-59

³⁸ *Ibid.* II, 53

³⁹ *Ibid.* II, 54

no root in him But that which a man is" is his own " But the Yankee Emerson cropped out in the essay on "Wealth" in his volume entitled "The Conduct of Life," which reminded his recent French biographer, Regis Michaud, of Andrew Carnegie's characteristic volume entitled "The Gospel of Wealth," and Henry Ford's books "

His individualism thus far seems unqualified W C Brownell wrote that "Obey thyself" and "Trust thyself" are "adjurations he never qualifies He establishes egotism on a basis of practicable infallibility " " Brownell would be on incontestable ground were it not for the essay entitled "The Over-Soul " Now we see why the individual may trust himself "Man is a stream whose source is hidden Always our being is descending into us from we know not whence " " "There is no bar or wall in the soul where man the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins " " "We distinguish the announcements of the soul, its manifestations of its own nature, by the term Revelation For this communication is an influx of the divine mind into our mind," of the Over-Soul into our soul " In his essay on "Self-Reliance" he admitted that when "we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves but allow a passage of its beams " " The famous misconstrued sentence, "Hitch your wagon to a star," occurring in his essay on "Civilization," in his book entitled "Society and Solitude," " might well have been included in this essay on "The Over-Soul " What he meant by this sentence was to put yourself in contact with the Infinite "

⁴⁰ *Ibid* , II, 86

⁴¹ Michaud, 351

⁴² Brownell, W C, *American Prose Masters* (New York Scribner, 1909), 165

⁴³ *Works*, II, 252

⁴⁴ *Ibid* , II, 255

⁴⁵ *Ibid* , II, 263

⁴⁶ *Ibid* , II, 65

⁴⁷ *Ibid* , VII, 33

⁴⁸ Sherman, 92

He continued, if man "would know what the great God speaketh, he must 'go into his closet and shut the door', as Jesus said God will not manifest himself to cowards He must greatly listen to himself, withdrawing himself from all the accents of other men's devotion " "He that finds God a sweet, enveloping thought to him, never counts his company When I sit in that presence, who shall dare to come in? When I rest in perfect humility, when I burn with pure love, what can Calvin or Swedenborg say?" " He wrote again, that "The poor Jews of the wilderness cried 'Let not the Lord speak to us, let Moses speak to us ' But the simple and sincere soul makes the contrary prayer 'Let no intruder come between Thee and me, let me know it is Thy will, and I ask no more ' " "

It was in the same essay that he explained his fear of organization and association From what has been quoted, it might be asked why, if all men are a part of the universal essence of divinity, may not a hundred men be nearer right than one or fifty? He disposed of the whole matter, at least to his own satisfaction, when he wrote, "Men descend to meet " "

Prayer, on the other hand, seemed to him to be an effort to ascend, to make complete contact with the Over-Soul, in the intended sense of the phrase, it is to "hitch your wagon to a star " In his essay on "Self-Reliance" he wrote that "prayer is the contemiplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul But prayer as a means to effect a private end, is theft and meanness. It supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness As soon as the man is at one

⁴⁹ *Works*, II, p. 276

⁵⁰ Quoted by Peabody, Francis, "Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Doctrine of the Divine Immanence", *Pioneers of Religious Liberty in America* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1903), 329 See *Works*, II, 78, for part of this quotation

⁵¹ *Works*, II, 261

with God, he will not beg. He will then see prayer in all action. The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed it, the prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of his oar, are true prayers heard throughout nature, though for cheap ends." "With little sense of the oneness of man with God, which was of first importance to Emerson, Ingersoll was later to recast this idea in his utilitarian way into one superb sentence: "To plow is to pray, to plant is to prophesy, and the harvest answers and fulfills." "

6

His combined concepts of the divinity of the soul and of prayer as "the soliloquy of a soul," point clearly toward pantheism. He may be termed a pantheist, and his most concise expression of his pantheism was his poem entitled "Brahma," which puzzled Bostonians of his day.

But his pantheism was not of the Rousseauistic, naturalistic type, he wrote in his journal, "God defend me from ever looking at a man as an animal." "Perhaps it would be most accurate to say that his concept of God was that of an impersonal force, principle, essence, which included all persons and yet surpassed all impersonally. He once made a reference to "God, or pure mind." "In his journal he wrote, "I say, that I cannot find, when I explore my own consciousness, any truth in saying that God is a person, but the reverse. I feel that there is some profanation in saying, He is personal. To represent him as an individual is to shut him out of my consciousness." "I deny personality to God, because it is too little, not too much. [He is] the life of life, the reason

⁵² *Ibid.*, II, 76-77

⁵³ Ingersoll, *Works* (Ed. C. P. Farrell. New York: C. P. Farrell, 1900, 12 vols.), I, 401

⁵⁴ *Journals*, III, 221

⁵⁵ Quoted by Brownell, 150

⁵⁶ *Journals*, IV, 403-404

of reason, the love of love " " God the Father must have seemed to him as naive and anthropomorphic a conception as God the Son, unless the word father be interpreted abstractly as creative principle

As for Jesus, he wrote that "admiration for him runs away with reverence for the human soul" ¹⁷ So far from regarding him as God the Son, he considered him an imperfect man who exhibited a "very exclusive and partial development of the moral element A perfect man should exhibit all the traits of humanity, and should expressly recognize intellectual nature Socrates I call a complete, universal man " "

7

With his pantheism went his theory of compensation which he stated several times, but expressed most completely in his important essay entitled simply "Compensation"

He referred to a preacher who "assumed that judgment is not executed in this world, that the wicked are successful, that the good are miserable, and then urged from reason and from Scripture a compensation to be made to both parties in the next life" "What did the preacher mean by saying that the good are miserable in the present life? Was it that houses and lands, offices, wine, horses, dress, luxury, are had by unprincipled men, whilst the saints are poor and despised, and that a compensation is to be made to these last hereafter, by giving them like gratifications another day,—bankstock and doubloons, venison and champagne? This must be the compensation intended, for what else? Is it that they are to have leave to pray and praise? to love and serve men? Why, that they can do now " " In general, every evil to which we

¹⁷ Quoted by Peabody, 327 Similarly, *Journals*, IV, 185

¹⁸ Quoted by Peabody, 320

¹⁹ *Journals*, III, 531-532, III, 518

²⁰ *Works* II, 92

do not succumb is a benefactor. As the Sandwich Islander believes that the strength and valor of the enemy he kills passes into himself, so we gain the strength of the temptation we resist."⁶¹ "In the nature of the soul is the compensation for the inequalities of condition."⁶² "Thus in the soul of man", he declared in the same vein, in the "Divinity School Address," "there is a justice whose retributions are instant and entire. He who does a good deed is instantly ennobled. He who does a mean deed is by the action itself contracted. He who puts off impurity, thereby puts on purity. If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God."⁶³ "There is no penalty to virtue, no penalty to wisdom, they are proper additions of being. In a virtuous action, I properly am, in a virtuous act, I add to the world, I plant into deserts conquered from chaos and nothing, and see the darkness receding on the limits of the horizon."⁶⁴

Evil seemed to him privative, merely the absence of good, "he who puts off impurity, thereby puts on purity." In the Divinity School Address, he declared that "good is positive. Evil is merely privative, not absolute, it is like cold, which is the privation of heat. All evil is so much death or nonentity. Benevolence is absolute and real."⁶⁵ His biographer, Phillips Russell, wrote that he "believed that the world, as the expression of an ineffable intelligence, was good at the core, and that whatever was temporarily evil at or near the surface could be, and would be, converted into good by intelligent men." This doctrine that "evil was not an entity, but a temporary absence of good", "explains why his contemporaries found great difficulty in inducing Emerson to enlist in any active agitation or to give more than passive support to any

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, II, 114

⁶² *Ibid.*, II, 118

⁶³ *Ibid.*, I, 122

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 117

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 123

cause, no matter how appealing Emerson believed that the world was made up of tendencies, which were always proceeding in the right direction, or towards amelioration, and that it were better not to interfere with these tendencies by the interposition of the human will This is the basis of Emerson's persistent optimism,"⁶⁶ and of his pacifism

8

To some, his insistence that evil is merely privative and may be annihilated by spirituality, a doctrine which Mrs Mary Baker Eddy seized upon for Christian Science, seems a denial of reality As such, they consider it his greatest defect Literary humanists like Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, W C Brownell, Norman Foerster and others, hold this view " Professor Babbitt pointed out that Jonathan Edwards' reputation "has been gravely compromised by precisely the opposite excess in dealing with the problems of perversity Edwards is only exaggerating the facts,

with an almost maniacal insistency, whereas Emerson and the Rousseauists are simply repudiating the facts " "

More admitted that Emerson's ethical preoccupation and concern for character mitigate in him the defects of the romanticism which denied the dualism of good and evil He wrote that Emerson was a romanticist in insisting on "the elevation of enthusiasm above judgment, of emotion above reason, of spontaneity above discipline, and of unlimited expansion above centripetal control," but that Emersonianism should be defined "as romanticism rooted in Puritan divinity " " More concluded that, because of his denial of the reality of evil, "he often loses value for his admirers in pro-

⁶⁶ Russell, 299-301

⁶⁷ Babbitt, Irving, *Masters of Modern French Criticism* (Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1912), 357 More, *A New England Group*, 89, 93

⁶⁸ Babbitt, 358

⁶⁹ More *A New England Group*, 82-83

portion to their maturity and experience. He is preeminently the poet of religion and philosophy for the young."⁷⁰

Brownell similarly pointed out, "The gospel of self-assertion, . . . which is but another name for Emerson's stirring 'self-reliance', has less virtue today than in a period of traditional tyranny especially blind to the ideal."⁷¹ Humanist that he is, Brownell misunderstood Emerson's "Self-Reliance", Emerson himself was self-reliant but not self-assertive. That is, he was independent but not belligerent. Norman Foerster, also a humanist, has pointed out that in 1834 he "observes in his journal that . . . self-indulgence and self-respect are two things."⁷²

However, some of his disciples have been belligerent. As Brownell pointed out, "Almost all of the 'perky' people one knows are Emersonians."⁷³ Rev. Francis G. Peabody wrote that "what in Emerson was a trumpet call to the defense of the human soul became in others a shrill scream of ignorant egotism."⁷⁴ Despite his misunderstanding, Brownell's point is well taken. Individualism may be on the wane. It may have already made its full contribution to society, and in abetting it Emerson may have made one of his greatest contributions. After its emancipation from astringent tradition, society as a whole may no longer need his message of self-reliance, but individuals still do, especially the young.

9

Emerson was an American, a Yankee, a Puritan, but he was more than these.

He was a thinker, but not a philosopher, for he formulated no system of thought. He frankly confessed, "I need

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 93-94

⁷¹ Brownell, 164-167

⁷² Foerster, 89

⁷³ Brownell, 165

⁷⁴ Peabody, 322

hardly say to anyone acquainted with my thoughts that I have no system " " He disclaimed system even when he gave a course of lectures in philosophy at Harvard, declaring that "System-makers are gnats grasping the universe " "

He was a poet, although most of his poems are not "poetic", being unpolished and even in free verse Of the mellifluous and "poetic," but unphilosophical Tennyson, he wrote in his journal that he is "a beautiful half of a poet " " According to his own criterion, he himself was only as much more than the other half of a poet as his lines are superior in sound-appeal to prose He was too concerned with content at the expense of form, too much a preacher, although often implicit, to be wholly a poet Foerster wrote that "his cast of mind was dominantly priestly rather than poetic, mystical rather than aesthetic " "

He was a preacher, but he withdrew from churches

Perhaps for his combination of philosophic, poetic and spiritual qualities, the best title for him would be that of seer And perhaps the best description of him is that given by Matthew Arnold "the friend and aider of those who would live in the spirit " "

Milton wrote that "he who would write well in laudable things must himself be a true poem " ⁷⁹ At last, the greatness of Emerson rests on the nobility of his life, for he was a man before he was a seer He wrote that we are "idealists whenever we prefer an idea to a sensation," " and in his life he eschewed sensations and the physical, in favor of the ideal and the spiritual He was an incarnation of the spiritual

⁷ *Journals*, V, 326

⁸⁰ Quoted in Peabody, 315

⁸¹ *Journals*, V, 57

⁸² Foerster, 109

⁸³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 52

⁸⁴ Moody, William Vaughan, editor, *Complete Poetical Works of John Milton* (Houghton Mifflin Boston 1924), xi

⁸⁵ Quoted by Sherman, 89

Michaud wrote that he was "a consistent idealist [who] was to demand, one day, the right to shoulder a gun for every honest self-respecting man."⁸² This may be French idealism, especially German and Italian idealism, but to Emerson, idealism could not consist in the sensation of shouldering a gun. Michaud later came nearer to his idealism when he wrote that, like Plotinus, Emerson was "ashamed to think that his soul inhabited a body."⁸³ Foerster criticized him because "He passed at one step from the life of the senses to the life of the spirit, virtually omitting that vast intervening realm of the human emotions which is the main content of ordinary life and literature. This is the central deficiency in Emerson."⁸⁴ He was not emotional regarding particulars, whether things or people, and Brownell wrote that "he was in love only with the ideal."⁸⁵ He was in love with the One, which he perceived to be Beauty, Truth and Goodness,⁸⁶ a new trinity of the ideal.

His character was proportionately exalted. Wrote Brownell, "All the inconsistencies, the contradictions, the paradoxes, the inconsequences, even the commonplaces of his writings are absorbed and transfigured by his personal rectitude and singleness. One feels that what he says possesses a virtue of its own in the fact of having been said by him. He has limitations but no infirmities." He "never committed any — not even the most venial error. Nor was his blamelessness in the least alloyed with weakness. His energy was as marked as his rectitude. He passed through the most stirring times, he shared the daily life of his fellows and neighbors and was part and parcel of a modern American community for nearly four score years, and never

⁸² Michaud, 8

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 220

⁸⁴ Foerster, 101

⁸⁵ Brownell, 147-148

⁸⁶ Foerster, 93

in any respect or in the slightest degree, . . . failed to illustrate — to incarnate — the ideal life. Emerson is . . . [American] refutation of alien criticism, grossly persuaded of our materialism and interestedness " "

⁸⁷ Brownell, 136-138

XI

THEODORE PARKER CHURCHMAN MILITANT

1

ALTHOUGH Theodore Parker was a preacher, he is as significant because of what he did as because of what he said. His utterances no longer seem revolutionary, but his life is still an inspiration.

Yet on March 27, 1851, when he was forty years old, he wrote in his journal "To me it seems as if my life was [sic] a failure. Let me look back at it, — 1 Domestically — 'Tis mainly so for I have no children, and what is a house without? 2 Socially — It is completely a failure. Here I am as much an outcast from society as if I were a convicted pirate. I mean from all that calls itself 'decent society,' 'respectable society,' in Boston. 3 Professionally -- I stand all alone, not a minister with me. I see no young men rising up to take ground with me, or in advance of me."

On another occasion, he wrote in his journal, "I love fame, and for religion I took a path that I knew would lead me to infamy all my life, and, if anything ever comes of it, it will be when I am wholly oblivious to all such things." He was too modest when he evaluated his life, but he was a true prophet regarding his reputation.

¹ Quoted by Frothingham, Octavius Brooks, *Theodore Parker* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1886), 347.

² Quoted in *ibid.*, 345.

2

He was given by fate a fine heredity, but it was left for him to give himself a fine training. Born in 1810, near Lexington, Massachusetts, the youngest of eleven children, he was a descendant of Norman ancestors who may have been keepers of the English royal parks centuries before. Hence the family name, Parker. An ancestor was related by marriage to Sir Richard Saltonstall, and the family landed in America in 1635. He was a grandson of John Parker, who commanded the rebels in the Battle of Lexington and fired what Emerson was to call "the shot heard round the world." Theodore treasured the gun with which that shot was fired, and finally presented it to the State of Massachusetts. It is exhibited in the new State House.

His early interest in both nature and books was his most striking youthful quality,³ and after a little formal schooling he got himself accepted as a freshman at Harvard without telling his family in advance. But the family had no money to pay tuition, and he succeeded in keeping up with his class and passing all examinations merely by studying at home. Because he did not pay tuition, he was not granted a diploma, but in 1840 Harvard granted him an honorary Master of Arts degree. After teaching a while, he entered the Harvard Divinity School in 1834, and soon after leaving it in 1836, he became minister of the Unitarian Church at West Roxbury.

He was married to Lydia Cabot and ordained at West Roxbury in the spring of 1837, but he remained a student and scholar all his life. Love did not distract him from books, nor theology from philology. He wrote to Miss Cabot before they were married, "I love my books the more, my school the more, mankind the more, and even, I believe, my God the more, from loving you."⁴ His interest in languages never left him

³ Chadwick, John W. *Theodore Parker: Preacher and Reformer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1900), 8-9.

⁴ Frothingham, 35.

and he is said to have had a knowledge of twenty, including not only such obvious choices as Latin, French and German, but also Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Icelandic, Chaldaic Persian, Coptic, Arabic, Swedish, Danish, modern and ancient Greek, Syriac, Hebrew, Ethiopic, Russian, the African Mpongive dialect, Phoenician, Etruscan, Runic, Irish, Thibetan.⁵ He compiled comparative tables of philology in his journals, along with records of what he did, books he read, what he thought. He collected a large library, and owned, as well as read, many rare and inaccessible European publications.

3

As he entered Harvard Divinity School, he formulated for himself perhaps the three best questions which could be put to a prospective theological student. "1 'Can you seek for what is eternally true, and not be blinded by the opinions of any sect, or of the Christian Church, and can you tell the truth you learn, even when it is unpopular and hated?' I answered, 'I can.' 2 'Can you seek the eternal right, and not be blinded by the statutes and customs of men, ecclesiastical, political, and social, and can you declare that eternal right you discover, applying it to the actual life of man, individual and associated, though it bring you into painful relations with men?' Again, I swiftly answered 'I can.' 3 'Can you represent in your life that truth of the intellect and that right of conscience, so as not to disgrace with your character what you preach with your lips?' I answered, 'I can try, and will.' "

⁵ Chadwick 55, 159, 44. Fells, James "Theodore Parker and the Naturalization of Religion", *Pioneers of Religious Liberty in America* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1903) 353. Chadwick, 44. Frothingham, 47-48. Commager, Henry Steele, *Theodore Parker* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1936), 12, 31-32.

⁶ Parker, *Works* (ed. Thomas Wentworth Higginson and others Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1907. 15 vols.), XIII, 295.

In spite of these potentially revolutionary ideals, his ministry at West Roxbury went on uneventfully for several years, until he preached the sermon at the ordination of Rev Charles C Shackford in the South Boston Unitarian Church in 1841. This sermon, toward which he had been slowly but surely gravitating, caused a commotion in the Unitarian denomination and eventually he had to leave its fellowship.

This sermon, entitled "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity," was the most important that he ever preached and one of the most significant in American history. In it, he attempted briefly to separate the wheat from the chaff in Christianity. All ecclesiastical "forms and doctrines" are transient elements in Christianity, and included among forms are sacraments, rites and rituals of all kinds.⁷ He once referred to the sacrament of the "Lord's Supper" as "grocer's wine and baker's bread."⁸ He quoted a "come-outer" with approval: "All our meals are the Lord's Supper, if we eat with a right heart."⁹ Among transient doctrines, he included in his sermon that "respecting the [divine] origin and authority of the Old and New Testaments." "On the authority of the written word man was taught to believe impossible legends, conflicting assertions, to take fiction for fact, a dream for a miraculous revelation of God, an Oriental poem for a grave history of miraculous events, a collection of amatory idyls for a serious discourse 'touching the mutual love of Christ and the Church'."¹⁰

"Another instance of the transitoriness of doctrines taught as Christian is found in those which relate to the [divine] nature and authority of Christ." "Almost every

⁷ Works, IV, 6.

⁸ Addison, *The Clergy in American Life and Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1900), 239.

⁹ Quoted by Frothingham, 130.

¹⁰ Works, IV, 12-13.

sect that has ever been, makes Christianity rest on the personal authority of Jesus, and not the immutable truth of the doctrines themselves, or the authority of God, who sent him into the world. Yet it is hard to see why the great truths of Christianity rest on the personal authority of Jesus, more than the axioms of geometry rest on the personal authority of Euclid or Archimedes. The authority of Jesus, as of all teachers, must rest on the truth of his words, and not their truth on his authority." His favorite aphorism was, "Truth for authority, not authority for truth."

"if it could be proved that the gospels were the fabrication of designing and artful men, that Jesus of Nazareth had never lived, still Christianity would stand firm. But we should lose — oh, irreparable loss! — the example of that character, so beautiful, so divine, that no human genius could have conceived it, as none, after all the progress and refinement of eighteen centuries, seems fully to have comprehended its lustrous life." "But, if, as some early Christians began to do, you take a heathen view, and make him a god, the Son of God in a peculiar and exclusive sense, much of the significance of his character is gone. His virtue has no merit, his love no feeling, his cross no burden, his agony no pain. His death is an illusion, his resurrection but a show. For if he were not a man, but a god, what are all these things? [when] weighed against the illimitable greatness of Him who created the worlds. Then his resignation is no lesson, his life no model, his death no triumph to you or me, who are not gods, but mortal men."

The permanent in Christianity, on the other hand, "is a simple thing. It is absolute, pure morality, absolute,

¹¹ *Ibid*, IV, 17-18

¹² Quoted by Chadwick, 110

¹³ *Works*, IV, 21

¹⁴ *Ibid*, IV, 25-26

pure religion, the love of man, the love of God acting without let or hindrance. The only creed it lays down is the great truth which springs up spontaneously in the holy heart — there is a God. Its watchword is, Be perfect as your father in heaven. The only form it demands is a divine life, doing the best thing in the best way, from the highest motives, perfect obedience to the great law of God. Its sanction is the voice of God in your heart. " " "It does not demand all men to think alike, but to think uprightly, and get as near as possible at truth, not all men to live alike, but to live holy, and get as near as possible to a life perfectly divine." " "For Christianity is not a system of [forms and] doctrines, but rather a method of attaining oneness with God." " "For it is not so much by the Christ who lived so blameless and beautiful eighteen centuries ago that we are saved directly, but by the Christ we form in our hearts, and live out in our daily life, that we save ourselves, God working with us both to will and to do." " He had already written to a friend in 1838, "I can tell [my congregation] that Jesus has not exhausted human nature, that what is not behind them is before them, that a future is better than a past, and that they, by a faithful use of their powers, may yet be, in another world, as far before Jesus as he is now before them." "

4

It is almost unbelievable now that this sermon could have caused dissension in the Unitarian Church, although, after a hundred years, it is still officially rank heresy among all Christian denominations except the Unitarian, Universalist and some of the Quaker groups

¹⁵ *Ibid.* IV, 28-29

¹⁶ *Ibid.* IV, 30

¹⁷ *Ibid.* IV, 33

¹⁸ Quoted by Frothingham, 104

Chadwick wrote, in his biography of Parker, "It was his spontaneous, free, and joyous acceptance of Jesus and Christianity for their intrinsic excellence, and that alone, that was the unpardonable sin" of this sermon.¹⁹ Almost immediately, although not until the orthodox began the cry, the other Unitarian ministers of the Boston area avoided him — refusing to exchange pulpits with him, trying successfully to keep him from giving the Thursday Lecture, and forcing him out of the Boston Association of Unitarian Ministers. His congregation at West Roxbury held on to him, but he no longer could get a hearing elsewhere, even though there were those who wished to hear him. Finally, in 1845, a group of Bostonians arranged for him to speak Sunday mornings in the Melodeon Theatre, allowing him to keep on preaching in the afternoons at Roxbury. He gave up his church at Roxbury in 1846, in order to give all his time to his new project in Boston.

The Unitarians had quarreled with him, not he with them. But he became fully aware of the difference between them and him. His criticism of Unitarianism is still applicable to many Unitarian congregations, especially conservative ones in New England. He declared that Unitarianism was "too rational to go the full length of the supernatural theory; too sensual to embrace the spiritual method and ask no person to mediate between man and God. . . , humanizes the Bible, yet calls it miraculous, believes in man's greatness, freedom, and spiritual nature, yet asks for a mediator and redeemer. . . , believes the humanity of Jesus, that he was a model-man for us all, yet has miraculous birth likewise and miraculous powers, and makes him an anomalous and impossible being."²⁰

Parrington wrote that the sermon on "The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity" marked "the second phase

¹⁹ Chadwick, 101

²⁰ *Works*, I, 425

of Unitarianism — abandonment of supernaturalism for naturalism " " Parker put no reliance on the miraculous Commager wrote, in his recent excellent biography of Parker, that he had "only pity for those who sought in the aberrations of nature some divine revelation, nature itself was the supreme miracle Doubtless miracles had occurred, and would continue to occur, but they proved nothing, and if the church rested its authority upon this foundation, it built upon shifting sands " "

On the other hand, Parker did not appear to be a complete naturalist in his philosophy He tended to put some credence in spiritualism, just as some of our contemporary religious humanists, like Charles Francis Potter, are convinced that there is such a phenomenon as "extra-sensory perception " " He criticized the great Harvard scientist, Louis Agassiz, for attacking spiritualism from the point of view of materialistic science, " had many volumes in his library dealing with witchcraft, magic, and the occult, and, according to Commager, thought that spiritualism might well become the religion of the future "

Parker wrote that the "three great doctrines" in his "scheme of theology" were concerned with God, man, and their mutual obligations to each other "the infinite perfection of God," the natural and adequate "religious faculty" in man, and the providence of God for man and the religious serving of God by man Internal religion consists in piety, external religion, in morality The greater of these is the latter He considered that neither phase of religion requires a miraculous revelation, any more than do "house-keeping, agriculture, or

²¹ Parrington, Vernon Louis *The Romantic Revolution in America* (*Main Currents in American Thought*, II New York Harcourt, Brace, 1927 3 vols), 416-417

²² Commager, 83

²³ See *post*, 330-333

²⁴ Commager, 111

²⁵ *Ibid* , 125

manufactures, for God made the religious faculty as adequate to its function as the practical faculties for theirs " "

5

When his preaching in Boston began, his audience formed itself into the Twenty-eighth Congregational Society with him as its salaried minister, and even when it moved into the Music Hall in 1852, it kept the same organization. It was what might, perhaps, be called the first community church in America, and in founding it, Parker showed himself to be a man of action as well as a preacher. Among his parishioners, although most of the "respectable" people of Boston avoided him, were William Lloyd Garrison and Julia Ward Howe. Louisa May Alcott frequently came to hear him, and Emerson sometimes supplied his pulpit. There came to be seven thousand names on the register of the congregation, making it the largest in Boston, if not in the country, and the hall's capacity of three thousand was sometimes taxed, but no collection was ever taken. The expenses of the organization were met by only a small circle of his friends, but he finally received a salary of \$2500, with the offer of a six months' vacation. At last, as he succumbed to the family malady of consumption, he was voted a year of absence with full pay. He went to Italy, dying in Florence in 1860.

In order to hold such a large congregation, to say nothing of building it from nothing in the first place, it would seem that he must have been a great preacher. But we are told by his biographer, Octavius Brooks Frothingham, that he "had not rhetorical gifts." He wore glasses, which marred his facial expression, seldom gestured, his voice was not musical, and he read his sermons. The conclusion is inevitable that it must have been what he said rather than the way he said it which was important. And yet, not many great sermons have come down to us in published form.

²⁶ *Works*, XIII, 52-59

One of the most important of them was the sermon which he preached at his own installation in the Melodeon Theatre, when no one else would do it for him. In this sermon, he declared that Jesus, being "the noblest example of morality and religion," is our "model." A church should "aim to have its members Christians as Jesus was the Christ, sons of God as much as he." But he hastened to add, "If Jesus was ever mistaken, as the evangelists make it appear, then it is a part of Christianity to avoid his mistakes as well as to accept his truth." "It is Christian to receive all the truths of the Bible, all the truths that are not in the Bible just as much. It is Christian also to reject all the errors that come to us from without the Bible or from within the Bible."⁷⁷

At various times, he charged Jesus with a number of errors or shortcomings, such as belief in "devils, possessions, and demonology in general", and false notions "respecting the character of God," eternal punishment, the Old Testament, and his own earthly kingdom.⁷⁸ "I do not believe that the Old Testament was God's first word, nor the New Testament His last. The Scriptures are no finality to me. Inspiration is a perpetual fact." "I take not the Bible for my master, nor yet the church, nor even Jesus of Nazareth for my master."⁷⁹ "It is folly, not to say impiety, to say that God cannot create a greater soul than Jesus of Nazareth."⁸⁰

In various sermons, there appeared many gems. "A new truth can never do so much harm as an old error."⁸¹ "I must tolerate and comfort my brother, though I think him in error, though I know him to be in error. I must tolerate his ignorance, even his sin, yes, his intolerance. It is easy to tolerate a man if you know he is a fool, and quite in

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, XIII, 17-21

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* I, 264-266, XIII, 62

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* XIII, 62

⁸⁰ Quoted by Frothingham, 119

⁸¹ Quoted in *ibid.* 62

the wrong, but we must tolerate him when we know he is not a fool, and not altogether in the wrong" ³² "God is not to be benefitted by the paltry homage man can do him, but *we*—we are benefitted by it" ³³ "If you dare not say what you think, soon you will dare say what you do not think" ³⁴ "Philosophy is the love of wisdom, Christianity, the wisdom of love" ³⁵ "Great minds mould things to thoughts little minds mould thoughts to things" ³⁶ "I have only one consolation for all evils, and that is, an absolute faith that it is all right that it will one day produce the best possible influences over me There can be no such thing as absolute evil, and from the standpoint of Omniscience, when the whole appears as it is, there can be no semblance of evil This is all the comfort I have for any sorrow" ³⁷

He has been famous for his prayers James Eells wrote that prayer was his "vital breath It came naturally and easily It meant so much to him that he prayed to God as our 'Father and Mother'" ³⁸ "He has been accused of pantheism, but the accusation has come from the lack of distinction between what is in a subject and the subject itself God is in nature and man, but nature and man are not God Parker's great truth was this of Divine Immanence" ³⁹ Louisa M Alcott was quoted as saying of one of his prayers, "It was unlike any prayer I had ever heard, — not cold and formal, as if uttered from a sense of duty, not a display of eloquence, nor an impious directing of Deity in his duties toward humanity It was a quiet talk with God" ⁴⁰ "He did not worry, like the orthodox in the

³² Quoted in *ibid* 121

³³ Quoted in *ibid*, 53

³⁴ Quoted in *ibid* 61-62

³⁵ Quoted in *ibid*, 123-124

³⁶ Eells, 364 *Works*, VIII, 123, 129, 172

³⁷ Eells, 355

³⁸ Quoted by Eells, 361-365

words of Elbert Hubbard, that in order "to appease the wrath of an imaginary God, we must believe in an imaginary formula, and thereby we could all be redeemed from the danger of an imaginary hell" ³⁸ Parker declared that he preferred no God to the Calvinistic God ³⁹

6

He wrote to his nephew early in his career, "So a man is a Christian, it makes little difference whether he is a Calvinist or a Lutheran, Papist or Protestant" ⁴⁰ But later in his career, as he became disgusted with orthodoxy and saw the effects of it on its believers, he changed his tone James Freeman Clarke wrote that he "knew that every man's philosophy underlies his theology, and that his theology underlies all his practise He knew that theological reform must precede all other reform, that as one thinks of God and God's character, so will he form his own He knew that, while God is regarded as partial, willful, and revengeful, man will continue to be partial, willful, and revengeful too" "Those who believe that God has foreordained some human souls to an eternal hell hereafter, can very easily believe that he has ordained some human races to be slaves forever here Those who think that God is full of wrath against his enemies will consider it right themselves to be filled with wrath against theirs" ⁴¹

But even while he desired to liberate theology he kept his main emphasis for the better half of religion, ethics Sometimes, in spite of his great learning and scholarly bent, he preached on homely and practical topics, such as "The

³⁸ Hubbard, Elbert, essay on Parker in *Little Journeys to the Homes of Great Reformers* (East Aurora, New York: Roverlofters, 1907), II, 82

³⁹ Chadwick, 189

⁴⁰ Quoted by Frothingham, 50

⁴¹ Clarke, *Memorial and Biographical Sketches* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1878), 122

Temptations of Milkmen " " In fact, from the beginning of his career he showed a Yankee concern for the useful. In his lecture on Franklin, he considered that he paid his subject a supreme compliment when he said of him, "Institutions for theology have the names of theologic apostles, but institutions for humanity bear the name of this great apostle of benevolence " " He quoted with approval Franklin's magnificent remark, "If I should escape shipwreck, I should not build a church, but a lighthouse " " Of Parker, Emerson truly said that "he insisted beyond all men in pulpits — I cannot think of one rival — that the essence of Christianity is its practical morals, it is there for use, or it is nothing, and if you combine it with wrong conduct it is an hypocrisy, and no love of religious music, or of dreams of Swedenborg, or praise of John Wesley, or of Jeremy Taylor, can save you from the satan which you are " "

Speaking of his conversation in Germany with a friend of Goethe's, he said, "I told her there was, to my thinking, but one religion, — that was being good and doing good " " Doing good materially and spiritually was his ideal, and in one of his best sonnets he prayed

"Give me the power to labor for mankind,
Make me the mouth of such as cannot speak,
Eyes let me be to groping men and blind,
A conscience to the base, and to the weak
Let me be hands and feet, and to the foolish, mind " "

Whether he attacked what he considered obsolete theology or postulated what he considered true religion, his purpose was always in the spirit of this prayer. In the last year of his

⁴² Chadwick, 64

⁴³ Parker, *Historic Americans* (Boston: Horace B. Fuller, 1876), 41

⁴⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 59

⁴⁵ Emerson, *Works* XI, 271

⁴⁶ Quoted by Chadwick, 137

⁴⁷ "Aspiration," *Works* XIII, 423

life he wrote truthfully to his parishioners, "I have tried to set forth the truths of natural religion I have destroyed only what seemed pernicious, and that I might build a better structure in its place" ⁴⁸

7

He not only emphasized ethics and right conduct in his preaching, but he practised them. He once wrote, "It makes me groan to look into the evils of society. When will there be an end? I thank God I am not born to set it right" ⁴⁹. Hamlet similarly exclaimed

"The time is out of joint, O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!" ⁵⁰

Unlike Hamlet, however, he promptly set about trying to set things right. In fact, he became militant about it. When it came to his obsession, the abolition of slavery, he was as fanatical as his friend John Brown.

In the Mexican War, like Lowell and Whittier, he showed himself a pacifist. Speaking in Faneuil Hall in 1847, he declared, "If God please, we will die a thousand times, but never draw blade in this wicked war" ⁵¹. In 1846 he preached a sermon on war, which was a battle-cry for pacifists. "What shall we do in regard to this present war? We can refuse to take any part in it, we can encourage others to do the same, we can aid men, if need be, who suffer because they refuse. Men will call us traitors. What then? That hurt nobody in '76! We are a rebellious nation, our whole history is treason, our blood was attainted before we were born, our creeds are infidelity to mother church, our constitution treason to our fatherland. What of that?" ⁵². In 1848, after the war

⁴⁸ Quoted by Ellis, 362

⁴⁹ Quoted by Frothingham, 135

⁵⁰ *Hamlet*. Act I, Scene v, lines 188-189

⁵¹ *Works*, XI, 25

was over, he clearly saw the moral effects of war "Hereafter [the] soldiers will be of little service in any good work Now these men have tasted the idleness, the intemperance, the debauchery of a camp what will be their influence as fathers, husbands?"⁵¹

Although he was opposed to war, when it came to destroying slavery, rather than expanding it, he was ready to fight He declared that he preferred the breaking of the union of the states to the continuation of slavery and the binding force of the Fugitive Slave Law When it came to disobeying that law he was ready to take down his grandfather's musket from the wall of his study and fire it for freedom and union He clearly explained his position as a minister, regarding fugitive slaves, in a letter to President Millard Fillmore in 1850 "There are several fugitive slaves in [my congregation] They are strangers, and ask me to take them in hungry, and beg me to feed them, thirsty, and would have me give them drink, they are naked, and look to me for clothing, sick, and wish me to visit them, yes, they are ready to perish, and ask their life at my hands But your law will punish me with a fine of a thousand dollars, and imprisonment for six months, if I take in one of these strangers" ⁵²

A Vigilance Committee was formed in Boston, and he became a member of its executive committee " Its purpose was "to warn the blacks, conceal them, expedite their escape if practicable, stand by them with legal aid if arrested, rescue them from the clutches of the pursuers by guile or force if other means failed" ⁵³ When two fugitive slaves in his congregation were sought, he and others first made it impossible for the pursuers to nab them and then he married the pair

⁵¹ *Works*, XI, 25

⁵² Frothingham, 418, 437

⁵³ Quoted by Frothingham, 410

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 399

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 400

and saw them off to England. At the end of the marriage ceremony, he gave the bridegroom a Bible and a sword, instructing him in the uses for each.⁵⁶ On another occasion, the committee held a public meeting in Faneuil Hall regarding a negro who had been seized by pursuers, and incited the crowd to attack the Court House and free the prisoner.⁵⁷ The attack was unsuccessful. Parker and others were arrested and indicted for "obstructing, resisting, and opposing the execution of the law."⁵⁸ The indictments were promptly quashed.

Then John Brown appeared in Massachusetts, seeking rifles to take with him to Kansas for the defense of northern abolition settlers and for keeping away southern slave-holders. He met Garrison, Emerson, Thoreau and Parker among others, and Parker was one of those who helped him with counsel and with money for his enterprises.⁵⁹ When Brown made his desperate attempt at Harper's Ferry, Parker was in Italy, but he watched the event and its result with excitement.⁶⁰

But nothing, perhaps, more certainly shows that he was a man of action as well as a student and preacher than the fact that, like Channing, he gave up plans for a *magnum opus* on the development of religion in order to devote time and energy to aiding fugitive slaves and furthering the cause of abolition.⁶¹ But, unlike Channing, having made this sacrifice, he went on and acted regarding abolition.

It was the zeal of fanatics like Parker which helped to precipitate the Civil War, and had he lived it seems likely that he would have given it his blessing. The moderation of more consistent pacifists like Channing might have held the problem

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 404-407, 411

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 422-423

⁵⁸ Chadwick, 262-263

⁵⁹ Frothingham, 454-455

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 527

⁶¹ Chadwick, 264

in abeyance until it solved itself, or until it could be solved peaceably through the action of educated public opinion. But the energy of Parker is more dramatic and seems more attractive to most of us than the pacifism of moderates like Channing

8

His activities in connection with abolition show him most strikingly as a man of action, but even aside from that he was no mere antiquarian. He was dissatisfied, not to say impatient, with many aspects of society.

As a theological student, he taught a Sunday School class in the Charlestown State Prison,⁶² and of the penal system he once declared, "Our prisons are institutions that make more criminals than they mend." "He called capital punishment "judicial murder." "He considered the primary cause of crime to lie in property, writing that "seventeen-twentieths of crimes are against property, which shows that something is wrong in the state of property. Society causes crimes, and then hangs the criminals." "Of property he wrote "The present property scheme entails awful evils upon society, rich no less than poor. This question, first, of inherited property, and, next, of all private property, is to be handled in the nineteenth century, and made to give its reason why the whole thing should not be abated as a nuisance."⁶³

In his attitude toward inheritance and property he was moderate, for he wrote that "the sin lies deeper than the transmission of property from getter to enjoyer. It lies in the love of low things, and in the idea that work degrades. We must correct this notion, and then all is well, and, before that is done, to hew down the institutions of property, and cut

⁶² Frothingham, 45

⁶³ Quoted in *ibid*, 136

⁶⁴ Quoted in *ibid*, 363

⁶⁵ Quoted in *ibid*, 136

⁶⁶ Quoted in *ibid*, 135

the throats of all that own lands, would do little good " " He was interested in the communistic experiment at Brook Farm, but he was no more tempted than Emerson to join it " "

His attitude toward liquor was no more fanatical than his attitude toward property. He preferred temperance to total abstinence, but he wrote that the Maine prohibition law was "an invasion of private right, but for the sake of preserving the rights of all " "

In his interest in "preserving the rights of all" he even declared in favor of woman suffrage, equal education for women, and equality in every way for them before the law " "

His contemporary, David W. Bartlett, in his volume entitled "Modern Agitators," wrote of him, "It is the fact that he is a fearless and powerful defender of the wronged, which gives him a place in the hearts of millions who have no sympathy with his religious views " " This same remark has in recent days been made regarding Clarence Darrow. Parker's sympathy and active aid went out to women, to criminals, even to slaves. He considered that they had equal rights, not the least of which is the right to happiness. And to the least of these slaves, he was helpful even to the extent of committing treason. But he was not a traitor to himself or his fellows. Without exaggeration, he wrote from his death-bed in Italy to his friend George Ripley, "I have gone into the battle of the nineteenth century, and followed the flag of humanity " "

When Theodore Parker was born, Rev. James Freeman and Hosea Ballou had already de-Calvinized theology and

⁶⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 136

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 138-139

⁶⁹ Quoted by Chadwick, 273

⁷⁰ Frothingham, 364

⁷¹ Bartlett, David W., *Modern Agitators* (New York: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1855), 30

⁷² Quoted by Addison, 267

Thomas Paine had popularized more radical doctrine. Channing was soon to help found a church on greatly liberalized principles and there remained comparatively little for later clergymen to do as long as they remained in a liberal church. Consequently, Emerson and Parker left even the Unitarian Church and pointed the way to such a twentieth century community minister as John Haynes Holmes. Parker wrote, "I see no young men rising up to take ground with me, or in advance of me." A long time went by, but twenty years after his death a young man began where he left off. The young man was Robert G. Ingersoll. And in our own day, a century after he began his ministry, Clarence Darrow and John Haynes Holmes are carrying on his humanitarian and religious work.

XII

ROBERT G INGERSOLL MODERN PROPHET OF THE UNKNOWN

1

WHEN the apostle Paul reached Athens nineteen centuries ago with his Christian message, he found that among the statues, shrines and altars raised to their gods by the Greeks, there was one inscribed "To the Unknown God" This was done in order that no deity could be ignored and offended, and wreak revenge upon the Athenians With remarkable tact, Paul announced himself as the apostle of the Unknown God, identifying it with his Christianized Jewish Jehovah ¹

In our modern age, at the end of the nineteenth century, a popular religionist attacked Paul's still imperfectly Christianized Jewish Jehovah as a devil in disguise, and announced himself the apostle of the Unknown God He was labelled an atheist, whereas he was really an agnostic This man was Robert Ingersoll

He was born in rural New York State in 1833 His father was an orthodox Congregational and Presbyterian minister, who long preached with marked vividness and effectiveness, but in his later years his sons Robert and Eben are credited with having modified his views He frequently changed his pastorates The family lived at various times in New York State and New York City, where Robert was baptized by his father, and also in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois

¹ Acts XVII, 22-23

After receiving all the schooling available in the small towns where his father ministered, he taught school a couple of years and followed his brother Eben in taking up the study of law and being admitted to the bar. The two formed a law partnership in Shawneetown, Illinois, moving later to Peoria.

He was a successful lawyer from the beginning. He was popular, even though his activities, aside from the law, consisted in violently partisan political campaigning and in attacking Christianity with its creed, works, founder and value.³ He had early become unorthodox through reading irreligious books, and his rationalistic nature helped him into agnosticism.⁴ His main interest aside from the law was really attacking Christianity,⁵ but he found time not only to campaign regularly for the Republican party but also to serve as Attorney General of Illinois and stand for the Republican nomination for the governorship of Illinois. His religious radicalism kept him from receiving the nomination.⁶

When the Civil War began, although he had previously been a Democrat, he aided in raising a company of volunteers, of which he was commissioned colonel. Captured a year later and paroled by his Southern captors, he returned to his wife and law practice. In 1877, he moved to Washington, and in 1882, to New York City. For many years his income from his law practice and lectures on religion averaged \$100,000, but at his death in 1899 he left only a small fortune.⁷

According to his biographers, among whom Herman E Kittredge is the best, his scale of living was generous, his hospitality lavish,⁸ and his charities enormous.⁹ He declared,

³ Kittredge, Herman E, *Ingersoll: A Biographical Appreciation* (New York: Dresden Publishing Company, 1911), 91 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 30, 282. Ingersoll, *Works* (Ed. C. P. Farrell. New York: C. P. Farrell, 1900. 12 vols.) 37-53.

⁵ Kittredge, 513.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 63-66.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 451.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 430-436.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 449-457.

"I had rather be a beggar and spend my last dollar like a king, than be a king and spend my money like a beggar" " When he was warned by friends that in his charities he was sometimes imposed on, he replied, "The trouble with most people is, that they mingle so much judgment with their charity that it is nearly all judgment" " " A story is told, which is supposed to be characteristic, whether true or not, that when a habitual drunkard asked him for a dime on the street in Peoria, he handed over a dollar, with the admonition, "Now, don't waste it on bread" " " He was a *bon viveur*,⁹ and in this connection an anecdote is told. Having been informed of the moral perfection of a prude whom he was meeting, he asked him, "Do you drink?" The man answered that he did not. "Do you chew?" The answer was no. "Do you smoke?" No. "Do you eat hay?" Of course not. "Then you are not fit company either for man or beast." " He found great joy in life, and declared, "Every man who has caused real, true, honest mirth, has been a benefactor of the human race" " "

Against his personal character, even his violent antagonists made no telling attacks. They did not find much to criticize unfavorably and when they threw truth to the winds and slandered him, as they sometimes did,¹⁰ the public liked him too much to believe them or feel horror if they did. " His wonderful generosity to those in need,¹¹ his devotion to his

⁹ Works, I, 367

¹⁰ Quoted by Kittredge, 449

¹¹ Smith, Edwin Gaustin, *The Life and Reminiscences of Robert G. Ingersoll* (New York: National Weekly Publishing Company, 1904), Part II, 34

¹² Kittredge, 451

¹³ Smith, Part I, 72-73

¹⁴ Works, XII, 95

¹⁵ Braden, Clark, *Ingersoll Unmasked* (New York: Clark Braden, undated) Kittredge, 92

¹⁶ Rogers, Cameron, *Colonel Bob Ingersoll* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page 1927), 260

¹⁷ Kittredge, 449-451

friends," his singular attachment to his home and affection for his wife and daughters," have gone unquestioned even by most of his critics and have always been affirmed and praised by those who knew him."

2

But he had his faults. Even his admirers did not try to attribute to him the "imperfection of perfection." His greatest shortcoming was in the matter of legal ethics. The *Peoria Journal* editorialized after his death: "He accepted the theory of the legal profession without hesitation or reserve. He regarded his duty to his clients first. He had no compunctions as to the moral aspects of the case, he regarded his business as a lawyer, simply to serve his clients and win his case. He was bold, audacious, and inexhaustible. His opponents never knew what move he might make next to snatch victory out of defeat. Of course, few clients would overlook such qualities in embarking on a slippery lawsuit."

His biographer, Edward Gaustin Smith, cited an instance in which, by florid sentimentality, he won a verdict of "not guilty" when "the state's attorney, in moving for a new trial, said the verdict was in conflict with facts and that the defendant's attorney was possessed of superhuman powers."¹⁸ At another time, he defended a farmer who had murdered a neighbor over a boundary dispute, and succeeded in getting him set free.¹⁹ He defended the notorious "Whiskey Ringsters" and "Star-Routers,"²⁰ consisting of gangs of public thieves comparable to the more recent "Teapot-Domers" and air-mail

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 134

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 422 ff

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 456-457. Smith, Part I, 220

²¹ *Peoria Journal*, July 22, 1899

²² Smith, Part I, 122

²³ Kittredge, 521-522

²⁴ Smith, Part I, 123

contractors In the latter case, he is said to have been taken in by his own clients to the extent of "many thousands of dollars in cash" ²⁵ Thus were illustrated several of his characteristics, such as his lax legal conscience, his lack of business acumen, his generosity, and (since he won his case) his professional skill

His tactics might be defended on the ground that he believed in determinism, that we do what we do without choice or freedom of will, and that he did not believe in capital punishment ²⁶ But in theory he admitted the right of society to defend itself ²⁷ He compares unfavorably with a lawyer like Abraham Lincoln who, years earlier in the same part of the country, is said to have refused to defend those whom he knew to be guilty and, on one occasion, to have thrown up a case in process of trial, when he became convinced of his client's guilt

3

He was guilty of being a blind partisan in politics All his purely political interests and efforts were concerned with the Republican party and its presidential campaigns

When he did not participate in campaigns, he said it was because no great principles were at stake Yet he regretted that the federal government did not "give as much to educate two men as to kill one," ²⁸ and he wished to see an international court established for the preservation of world peace ²⁹ He favored divorce, birth control, woman suffrage, and abolition of capital punishment ³⁰ Were these not great principles? He seems to have confined his working interest in political

²⁵ Kittredge, 125

²⁶ *Works*, VII, 218, VIII, 615, XI, 145 ff

²⁷ *Ibid*, VIII, 615

²⁸ *Ibid*, VIII, 110

²⁹ *Ibid*, IV, 125-126

³⁰ *Ibid*, IV, 140-141, VIII, 482, 564-565

principles to the Republican party platform. What it did not recognize he considered not worth working for. This was a deadly and blighting partisanship.

But he uttered many fine-sounding statements about partisanship. "I do not believe in being the slave or serf of a party. Go with it if it is going your road, and when the road forks, take the one that leads to the place that you wish to visit, no matter whether the party goes that way or not." "He acted on this principle when he refused to hedge on the matter of religion, when he was considered for the Republican nomination for the governorship of Illinois in 1868," but he appears to have been a Republican and nothing else, when he declared that he "would rather have a bad man belonging to my party in place, than a good man belonging to the other." "Another time he declared himself in favor of "such civil service reform that all the offices will be filled with good and competent Republicans. The majority should rule, and the men who are in favor of the views of the majority should hold the offices." "This is merely the "spoils system" dressed up.

He was often ridiculously and violently partisan in his numerous campaign speeches, perhaps reaching his climax in a speech given in Indianapolis in 1876. In that speech he said, "Every man that helped to burn orphan asylums in New York [during the Civil War], was a Democrat, every man that tried to fire the city of New York, although he knew that thousands would perish, and knew that the great serpent of flame leaping from buildings would clutch children from their mothers' arms—every wretch that did it was a Democrat. Recollect it! Every man that tried to spread small-pox and yellow fever in the north, as the instrumentalities of civilized

³¹ *Ibid*, VIII, 568

³² Kittredge, 63-65

³³ *Works*, VIII, 568

³⁴ *Ibid*, VIII, 61

war, was a Democrat Soldiers, every scar you have on your heroic bodies was given you by a Democrat I want you to recollect it Every man that was the enemy of human liberty in this country was a Democrat Every man that wanted the fruit of all the heroism of the ages to turn to ashes upon the lips—every one was a Democrat ” ”

Quickly he launched into the famous passage known as “A Vision of War” “The past rises before me like a dream Again we are in the great struggle for national life We hear the sounds of preparation We see them all as they march proudly away under the flaunting flags We are by their side on all the gory fields We are with them in the prisons of hatred and famine We are at home when the news comes that they are dead The past rises before us, and we see four millions of human beings governed by the lash Four million bodies in chains The past rises before us We hear the roar and shriek of the bursting shell The broken fetters fall These heroes died We look Instead of slaves we see men and women and children These heroes are dead They died for liberty—they died for us ” These heroes were all Republicans

In an instant, he returned to the charge and cried, “I have sometimes wished that there were words of pure hatred out of which I might construct sentences like snakes, out of which I might construct sentences that had fanged mouths, and that had forked tongues, out of which I might construct sentences that would writhe and hiss, and then I could give my opinion of the Northern allies of the Southern rebels [Democrats] during the great struggle for the preservation of the country ” ” He concluded, “I am a Republican The world is getting better Husbands are treating their wives better Elect Hayes and Wheeler and the world will

³⁵ *Ibid.*, IX, 160

³⁶ *Ibid.*, IX, 167-187

be better still I have a dream that this world is growing better and better every day and every year I have a dream that prisons will not always curse the land ' " All this, if you vote the Republican ticket He went on from one climax to another, from extreme apotheosis of the Republican party to extreme denunciation of the Democratic party, until finally he was exhausted and benumbed, babbling about Republicanism, progress, wife-beating, Republicanism progress, prisons, ending in a haze and a maze In that speech he was at his worst, rivalling Paul's Jewish Jehovah in separating the sheep on the right hand and the goats on the left The difference was that he separated the Republican elephants on the right hand and the Democratic donkeys on the wrong!

4

Along with his naive and crude partisanship went an equally naive and strident imperialism "Let the republic grow! Let us spread the gospel of freedom! In a few years I hope that Canada will be ours, I want Mexico, in other words, I want all of North America I want to see our flag waving from the North Pole" " The Spanish War further expanded his ambitions "I am an expansionist! I want all we can honestly get But I don't want the Philippines unless the Philippines want us, and I feel exactly the same way about Cuba" " He took a warm welcome for granted

He was opposed to war, " and suggested an international court of arbitration, as well as a kind of League of Nations, which would control an international army, " but until such an organization should spring into existence he declared we should "have a strong navy, big ships, big guns, magnificent

³⁶ *Ibid*, IX, 167-187

³⁷ *Ibid*, XII, 286

³⁸ *Ibid*, VIII, 617

³⁹ *Ibid*, IV, 124

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, IV, 125-126, 313

men and plenty of them, and if we put out the hand of friendship and fellowship [other nations] will know there is no foolishness about it This is the sort of arbitration I believe in " "

In tune with this speech was his frightful lauding of war and imperialism at a Lotus Club dinner in honor of Rear Admiral Schley held in New York on November 28, 1898. Speaking of the Spanish American War, he said, "The war could not have been averted, and the thing that makes me glad and proud is that it was not averted. I will tell you why. It was the first war in the history of this world that was waged unselfishly for the good of others, the first war." "I thank Admiral Schley for having enriched my country, for having added a little to my own height, to my own pride, so that I utter the word America with a little more unction than I ever did before, and the old flag looks a little brighter, better, and has an added glory." He continued by congratulating the admiral, himself, and everyone present over and over again on the English language, the Anglo-Saxon race, the circumstance that "we were well born and we were all born rich," on "the great Republic."

In his personal relationships he was irreproachable, but his zeal as a lawyer for his clients often obscured his sense of justice, his political loyalty became mere partisanship, his patriotism was imperialism. In each case, his defect was a virtue overdone.

5

For an enthusiastic Republican partisan, he was surprisingly aware of the plight of the workingman caused by what historians call the "economic revolution" of the 1860's, '70's

⁴¹ *Ibid*, XII, 142

⁴² *Ibid*, XII, 183-185

and '80's " He declared, "There is not a man in the city of New York with genius enough, with brains enough, to own five million dollars Why? The money will own him " " He might have said "earn" as well as "own " Many millionaires are wise enough to give generously and judiciously, who were not generous and judicious enough to refrain from becoming millionaires at the expense of their fellows His last sentence suggested Jesus' remark, "No man can have two masters " and "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also " " With a stroke of romantic primitivism, he declared, "No one is happier in a palace than in a cabin I love to see a log house It is associated in my mind with pure, unalloyed happiness " " Had he been born in a cabin, he might have felt differently, but as it was, he maintained a town-house at 400 Fifth Avenue, New York

"We ought to teach our children that great wealth is a curse Great wealth is the mother of crime " " For this reason, in addition to his sympathy for the poor," he advocated a certain amount of legislative regulation of wealth "I do not believe in tyranny of government, but I do believe in justice as between man and man " " He predicted a revolution in the relationship between capital and labor," but he wished it to come "through liberty and through individuality" " rather than through violence or even through law At times, he deprecated legislation as an aid to Labor He once said that he would like to have a Labor President and a Labor

⁴³ Schlesinger, Arthur M., *New Viewpoints in American History* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), 249-250

⁴⁴ *Works*, IV, 215

⁴⁵ *Matthew*, VI, 24, 21

⁴⁶ *Works*, IV, 215

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, IV, 216

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, IV, 222

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, VIII, 451

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, VIII, 268-276

⁵¹ *Ibid*, VIII, 268-276

Congress, so that it could be demonstrated that the law is unsuccessful in dealing with labor problems.⁵¹ But, in general, he exhorted Labor to resort to the ballot. "I am in favor of accomplishing all reforms in a legal and orderly way, and I want the laboring people of this country to appeal to the ballot."⁵² He once said that child labor could be controlled, hours shortened, and mining conditions improved by law.⁵³

He favored the nomination of Henry George by the Republican party in 1888. But he made no "plumed knight" speech for him, as he did for James G. Blaine, whose "political integrity has been forever clouded in American history by his dubious, if not illicit, relations, while in public position, with railroad corporations."⁵⁴ Regarding George, he said that "now is the time for the Republicans to show all their sympathies are not given to banks, corporations, and millionaires. They were on the side of the slave—they gave liberty to millions. Let them take another step and extend their hands to the sons of toil."⁵⁵ It was charged that George was a Socialist, to which he replied, "I do not understand [so]. He is on the side of those that work—so am I. He wants to help those that need help—so do I. The rich can take care of themselves. I shed no tears over the miseries of capital. I think of the men in mines and factories. I do not go with the destroyers, with those that hate the successful, that hate the generous, simply because they are rich. Wealth is the surplus produced by labor, and the wealth of the world should keep the world from want."⁵⁶

That this might be true, he advocated heavy taxes on the wealthy. "I want the people who are well off to pay the taxes. I want the law to exempt a homestead of a certain value, say, from two thousand dollars to two thousand five hundred, and to exempt it, not only from sale on judgment

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, VIII, 268-276

⁵² Schlesinger, 273-274

⁵³ *Works*, VIII, 273-274

and execution, but to exempt it from taxes of all sorts and kinds" ⁵⁴ This was a doctrine expounded by George H. Evans in 1844 ⁵⁵ Not only would Ingersoll exempt poor home-owners from taxation, but he would turn over to the poor much of the revenue derived from taxing the rich "The men of wealth give millions away in ostentatious charity and allow the men who earned the surplus to die in want Let those whom others have made wealthy give something to the workingmen—something to those who created their fortunes Do not let it be regarded as charity let it be regarded as justice" ⁵⁶ "I sympathize with every man who is willing to work and cannot get it, and I sympathize to that degree that I would like to see the fortunate and prosperous taxed to support his unfortunate brother until labor can be found" ⁵⁷ This, in the 1890's! Not only for the tiding over of depressions, but as a permanent policy, he advocated taxing only the wealthy To this end, he advocated a land tax similar to that propounded by Henry George in 1879, in his book entitled "Progress and Poverty" ⁵⁸ However, Ingersoll's plan was more radical in that it would bear much heavier on the wealthy and not at all upon the poor ⁵⁹

Finally, after having shown himself surprisingly liberal and capable of offering suggestions regarding the adjustment of capital and labor, he finished with a hope which did credit to his heart "Wages are too low in the United States The general tendency is to leave labor questions to what is called the law of supply and demand My hope is that in time we shall become civilized enough to know that there is a higher

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* IX, 523

⁵⁵ Perlman, S. *The History of Trade Unionism in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), 35 ff

⁵⁶ *Works* VIII, 129

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* VIII, 9

⁵⁸ Shippee, I. B. *Recent American History* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 145 ff

⁵⁹ *Works* VIII, 252

law, or rather a higher meaning in the law of supply and demand, than is now perceived When perfectly civilized, one of the necessities of life will be that the lives of others shall be of some value to them " "

6

That the lives of all should be of some value to us here and now was his main concern as a religionist His emphasis was upon the human rather than the divine, the world rather than heaven, the present rather than the future

He once called himself an atheist, declaring that there is "no difference" between the agnostic and the atheist "The agnostic is an atheist The atheist is an agnostic The agnostic says 'I do not know, but I do not believe there is any God.' The atheist says the same " Webster's New International Dictionary defines atheism as "disbelief in, or denial, of the existence of a God," and agnosticism as the "doctrine that neither the nature nor the existence of God nor the ultimate nature of the universe is knowable" These definitions are the usual ones, and when he declared, "I do not say, neither do I intend to be understood as saying, that there is no God," " he distinguished himself from the atheist This open-mindedness and suspended judgment was very important in him, and had he been as open-minded regarding other religious issues as he was about God and immortality, he would have been a greater man than he was Just as he maligned the Democrats in his political campaigns, so he libelled Christianity in his religious campaigns

A few days before his death he wrote, "I still believe that all religions are based on falsehoods and mistakes." " Long before that he had declared, "Infidelity is liberty, all religion

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, VIII, 423

⁶¹ *Ibid*, VIII, 247

⁶² *Ibid*, VII, 224

⁶³ Quoted by Kittredge, 215

is slavery " " The Roman Catholic Church, he said, is "an unadulterated evil The only reformation of which that church is capable is destruction " " "There is more beauty, more goodness, more intelligence in Shakespeare than in all the sacred books of this world " " "Religion has been tried, and in all countries in all times, has failed " " "Presbyterianism never made a human being better " " "All religions have been the result of ignorance " " "What are the orthodox clergy doing for the good of mankind? Absolutely nothing " " Intolerance is a frequent result of strong convictions, and it is true in his case

Examples of his dogmatism could be multiplied, and yet this vein is not completely predominant in him In his essay on "Individuality," he wisely wrote, "One great trouble is that most teachers are dishonest They teach as certainties those things concerning which they entertain doubts They do not say, 'we think that this is so' but 'we know that this is so' " " It was his ambition to be honest and open-minded, and he often succeeded He wrote that there are "many good things in every religion, or they would not have existed " " "I have great respect for Unitarians and Universalists " " "I have no objections to anybody's praying " " "So far as I am concerned, I most cheerfully admit that most Christians are honest, and most ministers sincere We do not attack them, we attack their creed We

⁶⁴ *Works*, I, 159

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, XII, 243

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, VII, 461

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 495

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 149

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 438

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, 99

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, I, 173

⁷² *Ibid.*, VIII, 173

⁷³ *Ibid.*, VII, 462

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, VIII, 104

accord to them the same rights that we ask for ourselves " " "While utterly discarding all creeds, and denying the truth of all religions, there is neither in my heart nor upon my lips a sneer for the hopeful, loving and tender souls who believe that above and over all there is a being who, in some way, will reclaim and glorify every one of the children of men " "If by any possibility the existence of a power superior to, and independent of, nature should be demonstrated, there will be time enough to kneel Until then, let us stand erect " " With the same caution, he said, "Nature, so far as we can discern, without passion and without intention, forms, transforms, and retransforms forever So far as we know, man is the highest intelligence " " With modesty he admitted that infidels "do not say that we have discovered all, that our doctrines are the all in all of truth We cannot unravel the infinite complications of matter and force " " Not only did he try to remain open-minded, but, like Paine, he admitted the desirability of variety of opinion "Is it desirable that all should be exactly alike in their religious convictions? Is any such thing possible? Do we not know that there are not two persons alike in the whole world? No two trees, no two leaves, no two anything that are alike?" " "

He went so far as willingly to let hope be cherished regarding the most fundamental doctrines of religion "I know nothing of another life I do not deny, but I simply say that I do not know I do not wish to destroy a single hope, but I do wish to drive from the human heart the wild beast of fear " " In a fine letter to a bereaved mother, he wrote in 1885, "If there is a God, let us believe that he is good, and if

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, I, 144

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, I, 85-86

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, I, 59-60

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, I, 88

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, I, 180

⁸⁰ Quoted by Smith, Part II, 119

he is good, the good have nothing to fear The truth is, that no human being knows anything of what is beyond the grave. If nothing is known, then we can hope only for the good. If we can get no comfort from what people know, let us avoid being driven to despair by what they do not know " "

7

Regarding the existence of God, he occasionally declared himself indifferent. "It is of no importance to me whether God exists or not. I exist, and it is important to me to be happy while I exist. Therefore I had better turn my attention to finding out the secret of happiness, instead of trying to ascertain the secret of the universe " "

He seemed to take God more seriously when he said, "Religion as it is now taught teaches our duties toward God—our obligations to the Infinite, and the results of a failure to discharge those obligations. I believe that we are under no obligations to the Infinite, that we cannot be. All our obligations are to each other " "

That he was not always indifferent to God was shown in his speech at a Unitarian Club dinner in New York in 1892, when he said, "I hope as devoutly as you, that there is a power somewhere in this universe that will finally bring everything as it should be " "

Indeed, twice he went so far as to admit himself a pantheist. "If by the word 'God' is meant a person, a being, who existed before the creation of the universe, and who controls all that is, except himself, I do not believe in such a being, but if by the word 'God' is meant all that is, that is to say, the universe, including every atom and every star, then I am a believer. I suppose that the word that would nearest describe me is 'pantheist' " "

⁸¹ Quoted by Kittredge, 377-378

⁸² *Works*, VIII, 209

⁸³ *Ibid*, VIII, 210

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, XII, 155

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, VIII, 171-172, VIII, 246

His attitude toward immortality revealed an even more hopeful attitude on his part. He said, "I have no evidence that human beings are immortal. There is to me no evidence of any power superior to nature."⁸⁶ Yet he followed Paine in reasoning, "It is no more wonderful that we should live again than that we do live. Sometimes I have thought it not quite so wonderful for the reason that we have a start."⁸⁷ He pointed out that a belief in immortality is an instinct in human nature. "The idea of immortality, that like a sea has ebbed and flowed in the human heart, with its countless waves of hope and fear beating against the shores and rocks of time and fate, was not born of any book, nor of any creed, nor of any religion. It was born of human affection, and it will continue to ebb and flow beneath the mists and clouds of doubt and darkness as long as love kisses the lips of death. It is the rainbow—Hope, shining upon the tears of grief."⁸⁸

He denied that he would destroy this hope. "'Oh,' but they say to me, 'you take away immortality.' I do not. If we are immortal it is a fact in nature—and it cannot be destroyed by unbelief. As long as we love we will hope to live, and when the one dies that we love we will say 'Oh, that we could meet again,' and whether we do or not it will not be the work of theology. It will be a fact in nature. I would not for my life destroy one star of human hope, but one world at a time is my doctrine. It is said in [the New] Testament, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'"⁸⁹

In his great oration at the funeral of his brother in 1879 he expressed hope wistfully. "We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless

⁸⁶ Quoted by Kittredge, 357

⁸⁷ *Works*, VIII, 54

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 270

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 523

lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word, but in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the flutter of a wing " " Another time he said, "If immortality could be established, the river of life would overflow with happiness. The faces of prisoners, of slaves, of the deserted, of the diseased and starving would be radiant with smiles, and the dull eyes of despair would glow with light. If it could be established. Let us hope " "

If there is a heaven, he said, it is "where those are we love, and those who love us. And I wish to go to no world unless I can be accompanied by those who love me here " " His provincialism, his "worldliness", is disappointing, might not another world present new and better loves? He could not rise to such a faith. The only alternative to heaven was for him a "sleep" "Next to eternal life is eternal sleep. Upon the shadowy shore of death the sea of trouble casts no wave. Eyes that have been curtained by the everlasting dark, will never know again the burning touch of tears " " He could not believe in hell, in his opinion such a belief presupposes both a devil and an unmerciful and even an unjust God " He asked his audiences how a finite human being could commit an infinite sin and thus deserve eternal punishment " "

He once admitted, "May be that death gives all there is of worth to life. If those we press and strain within our arms could never die, perhaps that love would wither from the earth. May be this common fate treads from out the paths between our hearts the weeds of selfishness and hate. And I had rather live and love where death is king, than have eternal

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, XII, 390

⁹¹ *Ibid*, VIII, 563

⁹² *Ibid*, I, 510

⁹³ *Ibid*, I, 523

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, IV, 288

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, II, 210-211

life where love is not " " This was his strongest statement regarding immortality, but in courage and strength he suffers in comparison with such a radical thinker as Sir Arthur Keith of the Royal College of Surgeons at London who wrote recently, "I have within me—as have all living beings—a great greed of life, an urgent craving for immortality That longing, which lies at the very root of the Christian religion, I look upon as a sin of the flesh—one to be conquered and suppressed It is a vice akin to avarice With its suppression comes a peace which only those who have felt it can realize " "The orthodox creed of my youth has been shattered by the impact of modern science That which at first seemed a curse has turned out to be a blessing For if men believe, as I do, that this present earth is the only heaven, they will strive all the more to make a heaven of it We have to be resolutely self-reliant, not casting on the cross burdens which we ourselves ought to bear " "

Kittredge wrote, "Is it not evident that agnosticism is simply a principle, which may be either positively or negatively employed? and that it is universally applicable? Is it not true that, in all questions not theological, the theist and atheist are themselves agnostics? Will any Christian who happens to be a scientist deny that the practise of withholding judgment pending the solution of a problem is the very bulwark of modern science? Will anyone say that this is not the agnosticism of Ingersoll?" " But in extending the scientific attitude to theology, Ingersoll did not perceive that there are limitations to science He said that there is " 'an irrepressible conflict' between religion and science, and they cannot peaceably occupy the same brain or the same world " " He said that science is all there is of good,⁹⁶ and is "the only

⁹⁶ *Ibid* XII, 399

⁹⁷ *Living Philosophies* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931), 150

⁹⁸ Kittredge, 184

⁹⁹ Quoted by Smith, Part II, 103

¹⁰⁰ Kittredge, 207

savior of mankind" ¹⁰¹ "Our ignorance is God: what we know is science." "Says the religionist, 'You cannot explain everything, and that which you cannot explain, that which you do not comprehend, is my God.' We are explaining more every day. We are understanding more every day, consequently your God is growing smaller every day." ¹⁰² "No human being has brain enough, or knowledge enough, or experience enough, to say whether there is or is not a God. Into this darkness science has not yet carried its torch." Insects, he declared, know as much about God as even the Pope himself. ¹⁰³ In damning orthodoxy, he closed one of the approaches to religion, and that is something which no scientist should do in the field of science.

In hoping against his conclusions, he gave his emotions countenance in the consideration of a problem he held to be intellectual, which is something that no scientist should do in the field of science. Religion is both an intellectual and emotional matter, and it was impossible for him to approach it with his intellect alone. The point is that he believed it to be purely intellectual and yet was partly emotional in his approach. He did not see and admit his inconsistency. He accepted more than he had to accept of scientific fact, and then became wistful concerning what he had to give up in order to do so. He declared that the "clergy know that I know that they know that they do not know," ¹⁰⁴ but he did not know enough to know that in the field of science, the more you know, the less you know that you know. He once said, "I think that a knowledge of the limitations of the human mind is the beginning of wisdom, and, I may almost say, the end of it." ¹⁰⁵ Like Plato, he felt that his own superiority lay in knowing

¹⁰¹ *Works*, IV, 504

¹⁰² *Ibid*, I, 56

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, XI, 131

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, II, 348

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, XII, 148-149

that he did not know, while others thought they did. And yet, although he professed to recognize the limitations of the mind, he did not understand the limitations of science, a product of the mind

8

He attacked not only the universal concepts of God and immortality, but also the Hebrew and Christian Bible. He correctly regarded the Bible as the source of Christianity, and in attacking its special divine inspiration, truth and value, he attacked not only religion in general, but Christianity in particular

He attacked its inspiration and divinity because, in his opinion, the Bible is cruel, impure, contradictory, and unscientific.¹⁰⁶ Paine had already made most of these attacks in "The Age of Reason", and, like Paine, in his criticism of the Bible he was less a rationalist than a humanitarian. He really attacked the inhumanity of the book more, perhaps, than its irrationality and unscientific attitude. He was fond of making a *jeu de mots* out of Alexander Pope's aphorism, declaring, "An honest God's the noblest work of man."¹⁰⁷ To him, the Hebrew Jehovah of the Old Testament was not as good as many men, consequently, he could be no God. The Bible and its God, he said, "sustained all these ten evils": human slavery, polygamy, wars of conquest and extermination, patriotism founded on egotism, prejudice, love of plunder, religious persecution, divine right of kings, belief in malicious supernatural beings, in an infinite being who approved all these evils, in vicarious sin and atonement, and in the dogma that a finite being can commit an infinite sin.¹⁰⁸ He considered the Bible pernicious in its influence, because "if a man really believes that God once upheld slavery; that

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, V, 212

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, I, 7

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, V, 355-356

he commanded soldiers to kill women and babes, that he believed in polygamy, that he persecuted for opinion's sake, that he will punish forever, and that he hates an unbeliever, the effect in my opinion will be bad. It always has been bad. This belief built the dungeons of the Inquisition. This belief made the Puritan murder the Quaker. ¹⁰⁹ It might be said that, in his charities, he allowed his heart to dictate to his head, and in his theological criticism he showed that his heart was bigger than his head.

"If the Bible is not true, it is hardly worth while to insist upon its inspiration. An inspired lie is no better than an uninspired one. If the Bible is true it does not need to be inspired. If it is not true, inspiration does not help it." ¹¹⁰ Feeling that the Bible is fallible, he declared that it should be "treated exactly as we treat other books—preserve the good and throw away the foolish and hurtful." ¹¹¹ "Were we allowed to read the Bible as we do other books, we would admire its beauties, treasure its worthy thoughts, and account for all its absurd, grotesque and cruel things, by saying that its authors lived in rude, barbaric times." ¹¹² He perceived that, when the Bible is read in this way, its "myths, though false in fact, are beautiful and true in thought, and have for many ages and in countless ways enriched the heart and kindled thought." ¹¹³

In criticizing the teachings of Jesus, he endeavored to "preserve the good and throw away the foolish and hurtful." Upon occasion, he doubted that Jesus ever existed, ¹¹⁴ but at another time he said, "In all probability, there was a man by the name of Jesus Christ, who was, in his day and generation,

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, VIII, 79

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* VIII, 64, II, 59

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, V, 141

¹¹² *Ibid.*, II, viii

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, II, 443

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, V, 273

a reformer " " Patriotically, he criticized Jesus adversely because he was "ignorant of the very existence of the Western Hemisphere, although it was destined to become the hope and glory of the human race " " More fundamentally, he attacked Jesus because he said nothing of education, science, industry, economy, cared nothing for painting, sculpture, music, or any art, opposed worldly success, wealth, all human ties, said "nothing about intellectual liberty or the freedom of speech," "the sacredness of the home," "the fireside," marriage and maternity " Still more important, he objected to Jesus severing a man from his home to follow him, " and to his doctrines "Resist not evil", "Love your enemies", "Take no thought for the morrow", "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out", "Swear not at all", "If a man sue thee at law and take away your coat, give him your cloak also", "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth", "And everyone that hath forsaken houses shall inherit everlasting life", "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's " "

Yet a Universalist writer went so far as almost to call him a Christian, as Conway did Paine "Take from what is now known as Christianity the doctrine of the atonement, the fearful dogma of eternal punishment, the absurd idea that a certain belief is necessary to salvation, and with most of the remainder the good and intelligent will most heartily agree " Rev Thomas J Vater quoted this passage from Ingersoll and asked, "Christian reader, if this is against Christianity, who would be for it " " It is true that he had a great respect for Jesus, saying that the place where man has laid down his life for man is holy ground and that some of his teachings are

¹¹⁵ *Ibid* , VII, 125

¹¹⁶ Quoted by Kittredge, 277

¹¹⁷ *Works* , III, 508

¹¹⁸ Smith, Part I, 186

¹¹⁹ *Works* , III, 503-507

¹²⁰ Vater, T J , *Universalist Quarterly* , XL, 302-303

excellent," but so far from being a Christian, he attacked even some of the key principles of Christianity

9

"The destroyer of weeds, thistles and thorns is a benefactor whether he soweth grain or not " " This has the sound of an apology, and for a destructive mind no doubt it is a sufficient one But he did not need to offer such an apology, and he knew it

He declared on another occasion, "I am a great believer There is no man in the world who believes more in human nature than I do No man believes more in the nobility and splendor of humanity than I do, no man feels more grateful than I do to the self-denying and heroic, splendid souls who have made this world fit for ladies and gentlemen to live in " " He was quoted as saying, "I never attacked religion I attack what I believe to be the evils connected with religion " " Another time he said that Bruno declared that he fought "not what men believed, but what they pretended to believe, and I may be permitted to say that I am in the exact business myself " " 12

His critics did not appreciate the strong religious strain in his character Harry Thurston Peck wrote, that to him at death, there could have been "small consolation in the thought that in all the public utterances of his teaching and in the phrases of his fervid eloquence there was nothing that could help to make the life of man on earth more noble or more spiritual or more truly worth the living " "In the preaching of [agnosticism] to the destruction of that faith which gives

121 Works, II, 399

122 Quoted by Kittredge, 109

123 Works, XII, 176

124 Quoted by Hughes, J. I. "R. G. Ingersoll", *Canadian Magazine*, LX, 566

125 Works, III, 249

serenity and happiness, there is something little less than devilish " ¹²⁶ The *New York Times* editorialized at the time of his death, "His main purpose was to undermine the religious beliefs of the people among whom he lived" ¹²⁷ A Roman Catholic writer wrote that Voltaire, Rousseau, Hugo and other unbelievers "built up something Will anyone, the most ardent admirer of Colonel Ingersoll, tell what he has built up" ¹²⁸ Another Roman Catholic pointed out to him, "You want us to burn down the hotel, and come out and camp on the sand without cover or shelter from wind or rain You do not offer us even the shelter of a bit of canvas " ¹²⁹

Peck admitted that Ingersoll's "doubt and his unbelief were honest doubt and honest unbelief, and as such they are entitled to the same respect that we accord to the unshaken faith of other men " ¹³⁰ But Peck and his other critics could not appreciate that he was an agnostic because conventional religion was inadequate for his particular religious needs Perhaps heretics and agnostics are more religious than many of the orthodox, the religious side of their natures being so active and insistent that it works beyond conventional beliefs and pioneers for itself

In Ingersoll, as in Paine, religious feeling was manifested in an evangelical spirit passionately desirous of the conversion of the world Had he held no positive beliefs, could he have been so dynamic in his missionary efforts? His positive, joyful, pulsing enthusiasm in matters of what we consider a religious nature was frequently revealed explicitly He must have had a spiritual vision of lyrical intensity when he said, "When I became convinced that the universe is natural—that

¹²⁶ Peck, H T, 'R G Ingersoll', *Bookman*, X, 29-30

¹²⁷ *New York Times*, July 22, 1899

¹²⁸ Coudert, F R, *Limitations of Toleration* (New York Truth Seeker Company, 1889), 25

¹²⁹ Brann, H A, "R G Ingersoll", *Catholic World*, LXIX, 790

¹³⁰ *Bookman*, X, 27

all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood, the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. I stood erect and fearlessly, joyously, faced all worlds. And then my heart was filled with gratitude, with thankfulness, and went out in love to all the heroes, the thinkers who gave their lives for the liberty of hand and brain. And then I vowed to grasp the torch that they had held, and hold it high, that light might conquer darkness still." "A man who could feel this exaltation was no morbid negator. He had found what for him pointed the way to the most abundant life. For others it might seem to point nowhere, but for him it pointed always ahead. This was his message to the world.

10

That was the high point of his message. There were other points as well. In the first place, he wanted absolute freedom. "A belief in special providence does away with the spirit of investigation, and is inconsistent with personal effort." "I do not pretend to tell what all the truth is. I do not pretend to have fathomed the abyss, nor to have floated on outstretched wings level with the dim heights of thought. I simply plead for freedom. I denounce the cruelties and horrors of slavery. Believe what you may, preach what you desire, have all the forms and ceremonies you please, exercise your liberty in your way, but extend to all others the same right." "On two occasions he explained, "By physical liberty I mean the right to do anything that does not interfere with the happiness of another. By intellectual liberty I mean the right to think right and the right to think wrong." "In reply to this the Roman Catholic, Rev. James M. Callis, wrote,

¹³¹ *Works*, IV, 66

¹³² *Ibid*, I, 64

¹³³ *Ibid*, I, 323-324

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, I, 353, VII, 6

"True ethics teaches that a man has no more right to think as he pleases than to do as he pleases. Of course, he is free to think as he pleases just as he is free to rob or to lie or to kill, but he has no right to think as he pleases. Morality is primarily in the mind, and the mind must conform itself to eternal Truth and Right. It must not indulge its own vagaries. It has no right to be wrong. No system of ethics can be justified, which allows a man the right to think what he has no right to do. That is the ultimate reply to the Ingersollian principle, 'What idea I have, I have a right to express.'"¹³⁵

Freedom was not for him an end in itself. He wanted complete liberty "to think right or to think wrong," in order that mankind might be free to develop as rapidly and completely as possible. Man, being without a God-Father, must be his own all in all. "Only through man does nature take cognizance of the good, the true, the beautiful, and so far as we know man is the highest intelligence."¹³⁶ "A belief in special providence does away with the spirit of investigation, and is inconsistent with personal effort."¹³⁷ "Religion does not teach self-reliance, independence, manliness, courage, self-defense. Religion makes God a master and man his serf."¹³⁸ Without God, however, "if abuses are destroyed, man must destroy them. If slaves are freed, man must free them. If new truths are discovered, man must discover them. If the naked are clothed, if the hungry are fed, if justice is done, if labor is rewarded, if superstition is driven from the mind, if the defenseless are protected, and if the right finally triumphs, all must be the work of man. The grand victories of the future must be won by man, and by man alone."¹³⁹ And he implied that the sooner we understand this, the sooner

¹³⁵ Gillis, J. M., *Catholic World*, CXVI, 224.

¹³⁶ *Works*, I, 59-60.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, I, 64-65.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, IV, 483.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, I, 59.

we will be put into the right relation to our work and problems so as best to work them out. Here is no silly optimism, "if right finally triumphs" was what he said. This is the dynamic and positive power in agnosticism. It presents the unescapable challenge that if progress is to be made, man must make it. The responsibility for success, the glory in it, and the penalty for failing, all are man's.

11

His concepts of morality were designed for such a situation. He revolted against the concept of salvation requiring that we "must believe in the Trinity—three times one is one, once one is three, and my soul is to be eternally damned for failing to guess an arithmetical conundrum. That is the poison part of Christianity—that salvation depends upon belief."¹⁴⁰ Orthodox Christians say that "Belief is important. I say No, actions are important. Judge by deed, not by creed. I believe in the gospel of Cheerfulness, the gospel of Good Nature, the gospel of good Health. I believe in the gospel of Good Living."¹⁴¹ "What is morality? It is the best thing to do under the circumstances. What is the best thing to do under the circumstances? That which will increase the sum of human happiness—or lessen it the least."¹⁴² "My creed is this. Happiness is the only good. The place to be happy is here. The time to be happy is now. The way to be happy is to make others so."¹⁴³ "True religion is not a theory—it is a practice. It is not a creed—it is a life."¹⁴⁴ "To plow is to pray, to plant is to prophesy, and the harvest answers and fulfills."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 406

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, I, 517-519

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, VII, 400

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, VIII, 474

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 323

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 401

"We do not need the forgiveness of God, but of ourselves and the ones we injure" ¹⁴⁶ "I believe in the religion of humanity It is far better to love our fellowmen than to love God We can help them We cannot help him" ¹⁴⁷ "We must teach our fellowmen that honor comes from within, not from without" ¹⁴⁸ "We must teach the world that the consequences of a bad act cannot be avoided, that they are the invisible police, the unseen avengers, that accept no gifts, that hear no prayers, that no cunning can deceive" ¹⁴⁹ "every man must stand the consequences of his own acts It seems to me that that fact will have a greater restraining influence than the idea that you can, just before you leave this world, shift your burden on to someone else" ¹⁵⁰ "An act is good or bad, or indifferent according to its consequences" ¹⁵¹ "He who tries to injure another may or may not succeed, but he cannot by any possibility fail to injure himself" ¹⁵² Calvinism, as he and many others have understood it, was unjust, for it allowed a sinner to repent on his death-bed and be saved, while a better character, who doubted the creed of the church, would be damned He would extend "the even-handed dealing of the world" to all worlds beyond, writing that "there can be no world, no star, where honesty is a crime" ¹⁵³ His goal was strict justice, and not the mercy, and what seemed to him the injustice, which are possible according to Calvinism His system precluding mercy is more rigorous and uncompromising than Calvinism, and perhaps it derived directly from it

He was a Calvinist standing on his head and his heart His extremism, his dogmatism, his invective against those

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, II, 474

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, II, 410

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, II, 474

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, II, 474

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, VIII, 169

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, II, 474

¹⁵² *Ibid*, VIII, 182

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, I, 523

who differed with him, his evangelical spirit, his belief in determinism (which is only Calvinistic foreordination and predestination rephrased scientifically), all were Calvinistic. With too much of the dogmatism with which Calvin denied the authority of the Pope and his dispensation of pardons, Ingersoll often denied the authority of the Bible and the dispensation of salvation through faith. Calvin denied purgatory, Ingersoll, heaven and hell.

12

Gillis charged that Ingersoll had no conception of the spiritual.¹⁵⁴ This is true only if the spiritual must be conceived of as mystical and supernatural. He had his own conception of the spiritual. "I cannot believe that everything can be accounted for by motion or by what we call force, because there is something that recognizes force. There is something that compares, that thinks, that remembers, there is something that suffers and enjoys, there is something that each one calls himself or herself, that is inexplicable to himself or herself, and it makes no difference whether we call this something mind or soul, effect or entity, it still eludes us, and all the words we have coined for the purpose of expressing our knowledge of this something, after all, express only our desire to know, and our efforts to ascertain."¹⁵⁵

He declared, "To do all the good you can is to be a saint in the highest and in the noblest sense. To do all the good you can, this is to be really and truly spiritual. To relieve suffering, to put the star of hope in the midnight of despair, this is true holiness. This is the religion of science."¹⁵⁶ "To recognize the finer harmonies of conduct—to live to the ideal—to separate the incidental, the evanescent, from the perpetual—to be enchanted with the perfect melody of truth—

¹⁵⁴ *Catholic World*, CXI, 225.

¹⁵⁵ *Works*, VIII, 525.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 156.

open to the influence of the artistic, the beautiful, the heroic—to shed kindness as the sun sheds light—to recognize the good in others, and to include the world in the idea of self, this is to be spiritual ”¹⁵⁷ “What is it to be really spiritual? The spiritual man lives to his ideal. He endeavors to make others happy. He does not despise the passions that have filled the world with art and glory. He loves his wife and children. He cultivates the amenities and refinements of life. He is the friend and champion of the oppressed. He enjoys the beautiful. He carries in his heart the burdens of the world. He searches for the deeper meanings. Spirituality is all of this world. The spiritually-minded man is a poet. If he does not write poetry, he lives it. He is an artist. Spirituality is the perfect health of the soul ”¹⁵⁸

13

He attacked the church with a violence which was often in bad taste, but his most concretely constructive suggestion was in regard to churches. It was once reported that he had attended a church and been converted, and when questioned about it by newspaper reporters, he explained that he had visited “The People’s Church” in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He explained that that “church has no creed. The object is to make people happy in this world. Miss Bartlett is the pastor. She is a remarkable woman and is devoting her life to a good work. I liked her church and said so. That is all ”¹⁵⁹

Perhaps with such a church already in mind, he earlier twice described what for him would be the ideal church. For a town of four or five thousand people, he said, one substantial church would be better than several weak ones. “The edifice should be of use, not only on Sunday, but on every day of the

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, XII, 62

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, XI, 484-485

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, VIII, 567

week. In this building should be the library of the town. It should be the clubhouse of the people, where they could find the principal newspapers and periodicals of the world. Its auditorium should be like a theatre. Plays should be presented by home talent, an orchestra formed, music cultivated. The people should meet there any time they desire. The women could carry their knitting and sewing, and connected with it should be rooms for the playing of games, billiards, cards, and chess. Everything should be made as agreeable as possible. The citizens should take pride in this building. They should adorn its niches with statues and its walls with pictures. It should be the intellectual center."¹⁶ He was not entirely original in this plan, for in the Middle Ages the cathedrals with their statues, pictures, storied windows, fine music, impressive pageantry, and their miracle and mystery plays on religious themes, were the cultural centers of the towns. But the breadth of his plan was unique. Since the time that he said this, many of the features which he suggested have been taken over by churches. Many modern congregations have built churches like theatres, and a few even make theatres of them. Billiard rooms, bowling alleys, gymnasiums, and even swimming pools are appearing in churches now. Orchestras, choruses, lecture courses, purely social gatherings, are being more and more sponsored by churches.

He went farther, however, than the churches are yet willing to go when he suggested that the minister should say to his congregation, "Now, I am going to preach to you for the first few Sundays . . . on the art, poetry, and intellectual achievements of the Greeks." Let this man study all the week, and tell his congregation on Sunday what he has ascertained. Let him give his people the history of such men as Plato, as Socrates, what they did, of Aristotle, of his philosophy, of

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 129

the great Greeks, their statesmen, their dramatists, their poets, actors, and sculptors, and let him show the debt that modern civilization owes to these people. Let him, too, give their religions, their mythology—a mythology that has sown the seeds of beauty in every land. Then let him take up Rome. Let him show what a wonderful and practical people they were, let him give an idea of their statesmen, orators, poets, lawyers—because probably the Romans were the greatest lawyers. And so let him go through with nation after nation, biography after biography, and at the same time let there be a Sunday-School connected with this church where the children shall be taught something of importance. For instance, teach them botany, and when a Sunday is fair, clear, and beautiful, let them go to the fields and woods with their teachers, and in a little while they will become acquainted with all kinds of trees and shrubs and flowering plants. They could also be taught entomology, so that every bug would be interesting, for they would see the facts in science—something of use to them. I believe that such a church and such a Sunday-School would at the end of a few years be the most intelligent collection of people in the United States. To teach the children all of these things and to teach their parents, too, the outlines of every science, so that every listener would know something of geology, something of astronomy, so that every member could tell the manner in which they find the distance of a star. " " " "The preacher must go, and in his place must come the teacher " "

14

His courage was manifested not only in destroying, but also in constructing new principles and plans which seemed to him better than the old. He declared, "You cannot show

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, VIII, 479-480

¹⁶² *Ibid*, II, 343-344

real respect for your parents by perpetuating their errors " " " "I want to honor my parents by finding out more than they did " " "The religions of today are the sciences of the past , and it may be that the sciences of today will be the religions of the future " " He rejected the theory of special creation recorded in the Hebrew Old Testament book of Genesis, because it was neither as true nor as wonderful to him as the theory of evolution " "I would rather come from a race that started from the skulless vertebrate, and came up and up and up and up and finally produced Shakespeare a race that has before it an infinite future than to have sprung from a perfect pair upon which the Lord has lost money every moment from that day to this " "

The Hebrew and Christian Bible seemed insufficient in comparison with "the real Bible" which, he said, men have been writing for thousands of years, "is being written from day to day, and will never be finished while man has life. All the facts that we know. All the wisdom that lengthens and ennobles life. All the best that all the men and women of the world have said, and thought and done through all the years. These treasures of the heart and brain—these are the Sacred Scriptures of the human race." "Instead of relying on fable, the real Bible would include all science. He pointed out that science "goes hand in hand with imagination. We know that it is in the highest degree poetic and that the old ideas once considered so beautiful are flat and stale. Compare Kepler's laws with the old Greek idea that the planets were boosted or pushed by angels. The more we know, the more beauty, the more poetry we find." "

163 *Ibid.*, II, 38

164 *Ibid.*, VII, 254

161 *Ibid.*, VIII, 215

106 *Ibid.*, I, 394-395

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 520-521

168 *Ibid.*, XI, 517

The "real Bible" had seemed to Paine to be nature, but it seemed to Ingersoll to be science and civilization in general—in a word, art. To this Bible, Ingersoll may be said to have contributed many verses, several chapters, perhaps a whole brief book. He was a prophet of the unknown, perhaps unknowable, God. But he was a joyful champion of the known against the unknown, of man against uncertain and nebulous forces, of abundant present life against possible future annihilation.

XIII

CLARENCE DARROW CHAMPION OF THE PROSECUTED AND PERSECUTED

1

INGERSOLL'S successor in the role of spectacular debunker of conventional religion appeared even while Ingersoll was in his prime. He did not so much drop his mantle to his neophyte as share it with him for a while. This new opponent of conventional religion, who is still living, although no longer active, is Clarence Darrow.

While Ingersoll theorized beautifully about his concept of religion, saying many things which are inspiring and elevating, and while his personal life was blameless, nevertheless his professional career as a lawyer and politician did not strikingly illustrate his emancipated and liberal religious views. Darrow, on the other hand, lives a better religion than is postulated in his words.

It is easy to show, by quoting his own words, that Darrow seems something of a fool. On several of the subjects on which he wrote and debated after retiring from the law, such subjects as prohibition, birth control, religion, and the futility of life, he often became violent. He did not mellow with age, and he never surpassed himself as he was in his thirties, forties, and fifties (1891-1912) when he defended labor leaders who had been persecuted and prosecuted, and wrote his fine essay on Walt Whitman and his pleasant autobiographical novel entitled "Farmington."

Moreover, his words and theories, with the single exception of those relating to the criminal law, were inconsistent

with his acts. He was a "wet" who seldom drank,¹ an opponent of birth control who sired one child in his two marriages,² an anti-religionist with a religion of his own, a futilitarian who has made his life worthwhile not only to himself but others. He has been largely a paradox of thought and action, and he has lived better than he has usually talked.

2

In his autobiography, he wrote that he was born in 1857 in the town of Kinsman in northeastern Ohio. His parents were both of old New England stock, and both cared for books and education. His father, Amiras Darrow, after his marriage attended and graduated from Allegheny College and the Unitarian Theological Seminary, which were located at Meadville, Pennsylvania. "But", wrote Clarence Darrow, "when he had finished his studies he found that he had lost his faith. Even the mild tenets of Unitarianism he could not accept." "He could not and would not preach." The mother also had "no religious beliefs".³

In Kinsman, after leaving the seminary, Amiras Darrow was the "village atheist" as well as the furniture-maker and undertaker. Yet Darrow wrote that "we children not only went to Sunday School but were encouraged to attend".⁴ This moderation on the subject of religion stamped Amiras Darrow as a better poised gentleman than his son was to be. When

¹ Darrow, Clarence, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Scribner, 1932), 438, 132, 297, 291, 124, 287, 288, 284. Whitehead, George G., *Clarence Darrow—the Big Minority Man* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1929. Little Blue Book No. 1464), 9.

² Darrow, Clarence, "The Eugenics Cult", *American Mercury*, VIII, 135 (June 1926). Darrow, Clarence, *The Myth of the Soul* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1929. Little Blue Book No. 1404), 12.

³ *Story of My Life*, 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

we read that Clarence Darrow was just "his father brought down to date and set upon a larger stage,"⁷ we should not be too sure that the son was the equal of the father in every particular

He also went to Allegheny College, but after a year there he preferred to go to work rather than to return. He taught school, studied law, was admitted to the Ohio bar, opened an office in his home town, moved to Andover ten miles away, and then to Ashtabula. He married Miss Jessie Ohl, and they had a son, Paul, with whom he lived during his last years. They were divorced in 1897. He was first successful in the law at Ashtabula, and in 1888 he went on to Chicago. He married Miss Ruby Hamerstrom in 1905.

3

Although he took several flings in politics, the law was always his business. In his autobiography he wrote that he "never wanted [political preferment]. It is hard enough to maintain an independent attitude and freely express one's self without being handicapped by the desire for office or money. Most people who follow a political career grow to be cowards and slaves, for that matter, so do men who sell prunes."⁸ "It is out of the question to have honest, economic government while a few are inordinately rich and the great mass of men are poor. In fact, it is to be doubted if anything really worthwhile can be done until there is a fairer distribution of wealth."⁹

A speech which he gave at a Free Trade convention in Chicago, following one by Henry George, brought him to the attention of Mayor DeWitt C. Cregier, who appointed him special assessment attorney. About a year later he was

⁷ Garrison, W. L., *Christian Century*, XLIX, 386

⁸ *Story of My Life*, 33

⁹ *Ibid.*, 117

promoted to the position of acting corporation counsel for the city, which he held for two years. He resigned this position to become the general attorney for the Chicago and Northwestern Railway Company, only to give up this position to become "one of the attorneys for Mr. Debs in the great strike of the American Railway Union. I did not want to take the position, but I [could not refuse] to aid them in their contest." "It was when he made that sacrifice that the real Darrow was born, and from then on he gave his life to the downtrodden and the persecuted."

He ran for Congress unsuccessfully as a Democrat in 1896, was elected as an Independent to the Illinois legislature in 1902, refused the nomination for Mayor of Chicago in 1903, and generally took part as a Democrat in "important campaigns since Grover Cleveland's first election," "even though he parted ways with William Jennings Bryan in 1908 because of Bryan's "narrow vision," his "determination to ignore dangerous problems," and his "activities in the Spanish American War." "But he devoted himself to the legal defense of the oppressed, except for these essays at politics during middle life, and except for his long series of debates late in life throughout the country on prohibition, progress, immigration laws, religion, mechanism and determinism, environment and heredity, and the futility of life."

The main events of his life are the twelve great trials in which he defended men who, in some cases, were guilty of crime. His biographer, Charles Yale Harrison, wrote, "During his life he defended fifteen hundred cases, one hundred and four of them involving homicide, very often without fee." "His great cases began when he defended Eugene V

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 62

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 377

¹² *Ibid.*, 94-95

¹³ Harrison, Charles Yale, *Clarence Darrow* (New York: Cape and Smith, 1931), 272

Debs in connection with the noted Pullman strike in 1894. Soon afterward, he undertook the defense of Thomas Kidd, President of the National Association of Wood Workers, against charges of 'conspiracy, growing out of a strike in the large sash-and-door factories of Oshkosh, Wisconsin.' He represented the United Mine Workers in 1902 in arbitration proceedings instituted by President Theodore Roosevelt. He defended Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone, of the Western Federation of Miners, in 1906, against the charge of murder during a strike in Idaho. He succeeded in having George Bissett, a friendless negro, acquitted of murder on the grounds of self-defense. He defended James B. and Joseph J. McNamara of the Structural Mine Workers in 1911 in Los Angeles on the charge of dynamiting the *Los Angeles Times* building, because the *Times* was an anti-union paper and an employer of non-union labor. He had to defend himself, successfully, against the charge of bribing a juror in the McNamara case. He defended Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold, Jr. against charges of kidnapping and murder in Chicago in 1921, John T. Scopes, against the charge of teaching evolution, in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925, Dr. Ossian Sweet and ten other negroes in Detroit, against the charge of murder, in defense of the home. He helped Arthur Garfield Hays defend the anti-Fascists, Carrillo and Greco, against the charge of murder in New York, and in 1932 he defended Lieutenant Massie and Mrs. Fortescue in Honolulu on the charge of murder.

4

Not only were some of his clients guilty, but he admitted that they were guilty. He wrote in his autobiography that he never put himself "in the position of prophesying or protesting the innocence of a client." Yet he wrote that "with me, as with most lawyers, a case becomes a personal matter,

and my side is right " " He admitted his clients were sometimes guilty, and yet he considered that his side was right! This is not a paradox when we consider his theory of crime which, in spite of certain inconsistencies and ambiguities, he worked out with a fullness which makes it his one real philosophical achievement. It has further claim to this distinction because only in this case did he practise and preach consistently.

"Often my clients did not do the things with which they were charged," he wrote in his autobiography. "Sometimes they did do them, and then I tried to make courts and juries understand the reasons why " " Here is the key to his theory of crime. He believed that criminology is a science, and "science is not so much interested in criticism [let alone punishment] as in finding causes " " In his great book entitled "Crime Its Cause and Treatment," he wrote that "this is not a universe where acts result from chance. Law is everywhere supreme. Every process of nature and life is a continuous sequence of cause and effect " "

In defending Loeb and Leopold he said, "I am trying to trace causes. I am trying to say to this court that these boys are not responsible for this, and that their act was due to this and this, and this and this, and I am asking this court not to visit the judgment of its wrath upon them for things for which they are not to blame " " "Crime has its cause as certainly as disease " " "I know that no man who ever wrote a line that I have read failed to influence me to some extent. I know that every life I ever touched influenced me, and I in-

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 34

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 425

¹⁷ *Plea of Clarence Darrow In Defense of Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold Jr* (Chicago: R. F. Seymour, undated), 86

¹⁸ Darrow, Clarence, *Crime Its Cause and Treatment* (New York: Crowell, 1922), 34

¹⁹ *Plea for Loeb and Leopold*, 86

²⁰ *Ibid*, 104

fluenced it, and that it is not given me to unravel the infinite causes and say, 'this is I, and this is you' " " Tell me that you can visit the wrath of fate and chance and life and eternity upon a nineteen year old boy " " " If there is such a thing as justice it could only be administered by one who knew the inmost thoughts of the man to whom they were meting it out. Aye, who knew the father and mother and the grandparents and the infinite number of people back of him ' Who knew the origin of every cell that went into the body, who could understand the structure and how it acted? " " You must appraise every influence " " , the civilization where they live, and all society which enters into the making of the child or the man " " "

"All people are products of two things, and two things only—their heredity and their environment," he declared in one of his great debates " " These two things are the causes, behavior the result

In a speech to the prisoners at the Illinois State Penitentiary, he declared that "there is no such thing as a crime as the word is generally understood " " The people here can no more help being here than the people outside can avoid being outside " " They are in jail simply because they cannot avoid it on account of circumstances which are entirely beyond their control and for which they are in no way responsible " " " He believed that the whole system of cause and effect, which underlies all human behavior, is in turn only a manifestation of destiny " " "No man has anything to say about it all, for back of all is Destiny " " " What is destiny? In algebra we let x equal the unknown quantity. In human affairs we call x Destiny " " "

²¹ *Ibid* 83

²² *Ibid*, 38

²³ *Capital Punishment* (Debate between Darrow and A. J. Talley, New York League for Public Discussion, 1921), 41

²⁴ Quoted by Harrison, 106-107

²⁵ *Story of My Life*, 216-217

The criminal, he wrote in his volume on crime, "is one who, from inherited defects or from great misfortune or especially hard circumstances, is not able to make the necessary adjustments to fit him to his environment" ²⁶ "Crime is a disease whose root is in heredity and environment, but it is clear that with most men, at least when young, by improving environment or adding to knowledge and experience, it is curable" ²⁷ "We must abandon the idea of working [the criminal's] reformation, as the term 'moral reformation' is popularly understood. As well might we cure the physically ill that way! [But] he may learn by experience and build up rules of conduct which will restrain him" ²⁸ In speaking to prisoners, he said that "if every man had a chance to make a decent, fair, honest living, there would be no jails. There might be some persons here or there who would do these things simply to be doing them, but they would be very, very few, and those should be sent to hospitals and treated" ²⁹

Conceiving of law as he did, as merely the "habits and customs" and "folk-ways" of the community", ³⁰ he wrote that "it does not always follow that the violator of the law is not a person of higher type than the majority who are directly and indirectly responsible for the law" ³¹ Moreover, he asked, "How great a difference [is there] between making a sharp trade with your neighbor and taking outright what he has? Yet one is business, the other larceny. What is the distance between hating your neighbor, and killing him yourself? There is no difference between the committed

²⁶ *Crime Its Cause and Treatment*, 57

²⁷ *Ibid*, 116

²⁸ *Ibid*, 276

²⁹ Quoted by Harrison, 111

³⁰ *Crime Its Cause and Treatment*, 6

³¹ *Ibid*, 2

and the uncommitted crime" ¹ He wrote of the 'Grand Casino [on the Riviera] where gambling was as openly enjoyed as on the American Stock Exchange' ² "Who is the perfect one that should be willing vengefully to punish his fellow-man? Let one look honestly into his own life" ³ "In his fine essay on Walt Whitman, he wrote "It is almost becoming a fad to forgive the evil in others and to insist that, after all, their good qualities give them the right to kinship with ourselves, but this is only one side of true democracy. The felon is my brother, not alone because he has every element of good that I so well recognize in myself, but because I have every element of evil that I see in him" ⁴

Since all men are constituted as they are, "in my vocabulary," he wrote in his autobiography, "there is no such word as 'guilt' and no such thing as moral wrong. No one deserves either praise or blame" ⁵ "No one ever judges anyone else without finding him guilty, no one ever understands another without being in sympathy with him. A person who can understand can comprehend why, and that leaves no field for condemning" ⁶ If we remember that others suffer from ourselves because of heredity, environment, and perhaps destiny, we cannot condemn. In his essay on Omar Khayyam entitled "The Persian Pearl," he asked "When will humanity be great enough and good enough to distinguish between the fault of the potter [God] and the fault of the pot [man]? When can it look over the myriads of human beings, each with his flaws and limitations and pity instead of blame?" ⁷ "There might be some excuse [for punishment] if man

¹ Darrow, Clarence, *Walt Whitman* (Garden City: Knickerbocker Press, 1899) (Little Blue Book No. 911), 41-42.

² *Story of My Life*, 122.

³ *Crime: Its Causes and Treatment*, 260.

⁴ *Walt Whitman*, 14.

⁵ *Story of My Life*, 125.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁷ Quoted by Harrison, 86.

could bring to trial the great potter for the imperfect work of his hand" "It is time we heard more of the duty of God to man" "As for human beings, he wrote that "to be all-knowing is to be all-understanding, and this is infinitely better than to be all-forgiving" "

"It may be argued that whether the victim is punished or simply restrained can make no difference In this lies the whole difference between scientific and humane treatment of the unfortunate, and the vengeful punishments" imposed on criminals " "No one was ever helped by punishment There is no evidence that punishing aids society" " "Instead of a law of hatred, we should have a system of pathological treatment" "There should be no trials, no lawyers, no judges, to pass upon moral guilt All those who cannot or do not adjust themselves to important rules should be examined by experts to find out why it is and what can be done, if need be they should be kept under proper and sufficient inspection" " "Instead of sentencing a burglar, for instance, to five or six years in prison, he should be sentenced to prison without any fixed duration And he should be let out as soon as he adjusts himself to life, or life adjusts itself to him" "

"If defendants were not regarded as moral delinquents, if the examination [of so-called criminals] implied no moral condemnation, if it was [sic] only a scientific investigation as to where to place him if he is anti-social, if public opinion supported this view the partisan lawyer, the hired advocate, should [sic] disappear The unseemly contests in courts will disappear, and justice, tempered with mercy, will have a chance" " Were such a time to arrive, Darrow would

³⁹ *Ibid* , 87

⁴⁰ *Crime Its Cause and Treatment*, 128

⁴¹ *Ibid* , 26

⁴² *Story of My Life*, 341

⁴³ *Ibid* , 355

⁴⁴ Quoted by Whitehead, 20

⁴⁵ *Crime Its Cause and Treatment*, 149

retire from the law, but until then he would continue to strive for "justice tempered with mercy" as best he could. He wrote in his autobiography, "The lawyer, if he has a deep sense of responsibility and warm sympathies, regards the human being in his hands in the same light that a physician views a patient in. Both try to relieve suffering, and no one would expect a physician to refuse to save the life of a patient. The lawyer's duty is just as binding, both try to allay pain and save life."⁴⁷

5

Conceiving as he did of the criminal lawyer as a physician, he wrote in his autobiography, "I have spent a large part of my life defending men charged with crime. I have done this for those who paid me, and for those who gave me nothing, and often have paid my own money to provide for the defense. I am sure that I have given at least half of my time and services to this kind of work without any financial reward. My only regret is that I have not been able to do more."⁴⁸

Yet he refused to take much credit for his service, and he remained, even in his own case, consistent about no one deserving either praise or blame. "I determined finally to retire [from the law] in 1928, after fifty years of what men are pleased to call service, which of course means serving one's own inclinations and purposes," he wrote in his autobiography. "I have never been able to read a story of an execution. I am strongiv—call it morbidly—against killing."⁴⁹ "I had a strongly emotional nature which has caused me boundless joy and infinite pain. I had a vivid imagination. Not only could I put myself in the other person's place but I could not avoid doing so. My sympathies always went out to the

⁴⁷ *Story of My Life*, 180.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 125, 20.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 313.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 232.

weak, the suffering, and the poor. Realizing their sorrows I tried to relieve them in order that I myself might be relieved."⁸⁰ "Whether I am an able lawyer or not I do not know or care, to be simply an able lawyer means no more than it would to be able to lift the strongest [sic] weight—like Sandow."⁸¹

He partially stated his ideal of a lawyer when, in his autobiography, he described "one of the best lawyers I ever knew" as "emotional and sympathetic, devoted to the principles of liberty and always fighting for the poor and oppressed."⁸² "Every advantage in the world goes with power. The city, the state, the country, the nation can scarcely be wrong. Behind them is organized society, and the individual who is obliged to contest for his rights against these forces in either civil or criminal courts is fighting against dreadful odds."⁸³

Walter Prichard Eaton, noted writer, critic and Yale professor, wrote regarding Darrow that his statement, "I believed that the cause was worthwhile," was "what seems to have been the motto of his life." We immediately are impressed by the apparent absence of financial calculation in all his famous cases, by the crusader spirit in which he entered them, and above all, perhaps, by the way in which he emotionally dramatized them to give them a general significance and make them focus a cause."⁸⁴ For him "to give the best years and efforts of his life to unpopular causes, fighting the battles of labor in the courts and crusading for his convictions regarding freedom and justice, is an unusual and heartening phenomenon. In Clarence Darrow the breed of the Puritan

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 32, 75, 106

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 426

⁸² *Ibid.*, 66

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 10

⁸⁴ Eaton, Walter Prichard, "Crusader for Social Justice", *Current History*, XXXV, 787

reformers still lives, though at first glance he seems far removed from Puritanism."⁵⁵ While Ingersoll defended capitalists and grafters in high places, even while he himself opposed hoarding and corruption, Darrow defended laborers who were persecuted and criminals who would feel the weight of what he considered vicious laws. His theory and his practice were consistent in this phase of his thought and life.

It was because he was opposed to the violated laws and to our present legal system that he defended criminals, as well as because he believed that so-called criminals have no choice but to act as they do. He fought the system which he considered bad, even while he did what he could with it, and in doing so he worked toward a better legal system for the future. He truthfully said that he was "not in favor of keeping things as they are, I would like to make them better."⁵⁶ Yet he once declared that when he died he did "not care what happens to what is left in the world, it doesn't interest me."⁵⁷

6

He attacked religion, but he had a religion of his own. He attacked not only the quibbles of Fundamentalism, like the Puritan Sabbath,⁵⁸ but even the most basic beliefs not only of Christianity but of religion in general—belief in God, immortality, and the value of life.

Regarding the existence of God, he was an agnostic. In a public debate on the question, "Can the Individual Control his Conduct?" he declared that he did "not disbelieve in a

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, XXXV, 790.

⁵⁶ Darrow, Clarence, and Stoddard, Lothrop, debate, *Is the United States Immigration Law Beneficial?* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1929. Little Blue Book No. 1123), 25.

⁵⁷ Darrow, Clarence, and Wilson, Clarence, *True debate: Should the Eighteenth Amendment be Repealed?* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1931. Little Blue Book No. 1596), 4.

⁵⁸ Darrow, Clarence, *The Lord's Day Alliance* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1929. Little Blue Book No. 1329).

first cause I don't know anything about it " " In his autobiography, as well as in his essay on the "Absurdities of the Bible," he expressed himself similarly " "

Regarding immortality, he wrote in his autobiography that "men have built faith in immortality from hopes " " His only concept of immortality was that of "infinite succeeding links of human life " " Yet, like Ingersoll, he wanted to believe in immortality, even going so far as having "wanted to believe in [spiritualism] and therefore tried to, but in vain " " "I do not relish the prospect of parting with life, because I do not like to give up those that I love," he wrote in his autobiography But "no one wants another life, we all want to go on living, which is quite a different matter " " Yet he declared at the funeral of his brother-in-law, "If any word of mine could call back his troubled soul, I should feel myself guiltier far than I would to cause a brother's death " "

He would not "call back the troubled soul" of his brother-in-law, and yet he wrote in his autobiography that he was never "enthusiastic about keeping others from being born, whenever I hear people discussing birth control I always remember that I was the fifth " " This inconsistency is heightened when we find that a few pages earlier he had written, "It is obvious that I had nothing to do with getting born Had I known about life in advance and been given any choice in the

⁵⁹ Darrow, Clarence, and Smith, Thomas Y., debate *Can the Individual Control his Conduct?* (Girard, Kansas Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1928 Little Blue Book No 843), 30

⁶⁰ Darrow, Clarence, *Absurdities of the Bible* (Girard, Kansas Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1931 Little Blue Book No 1637), 12 *Story of My Life*, 388-389

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 423

⁶² Darrow, Clarence, *Realism in Literature and Art* (Girard, Kansas Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1899 Little Blue Book No 934), 12

⁶³ *Story of My Life*, 398

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 449

⁶⁵ Quoted by Lilienthal, David E., "Clarence Darrow", *Nation*, CXXIV, 418 (April 20, 1927)

⁶⁶ *Story of My Life*, 13

matter, I most likely would have declined the adventure. On the whole, I believe that life is not worthwhile." "

In a debate on the futility of life with Professor Frederick Starr of the University of Chicago, he declared, "Life is a joke. It is an awful joke. A joke on me partly." " In his essay entitled "Facing Life Fearlessly", he wrote that the world "is almost barren at the best." " In the debate with Professor Starr he said that life "is an unpleasant interruption of nothing, and the best you can say of it is that it does not last long." " A couple of years ago he was reported to have said, "If I were a young man, with life ahead of me, I think I'd chuck it all, the way things are now. The world is all wrong nowadays." "I certainly have no encouragement for the young bloods that are just starting out looking for jobs. The sooner they start jumping out of windows, the sooner they'll find peace." " And were a young man to insist on the value of life, he might reply in words he used on a different occasion. "We know that life is futile. A man who considers that his life is of very much importance is awfully close to a padded cell." " In his fine essay on Walt Whitman, however, he wrote that "the Alexanders, the Caesars and the Napoleons are scattered", and yet every life measured by just standards may be as great as these, and the soul that is conscious of its own integrity knows its own worth regardless of the world." " Emerson might have written thus

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4, 470

⁶⁸ Darrow, Clarence, and Starr, Frederick, debate: *Is Life Worth Living?* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1925. Little Blue Book No. 910), 54

⁶⁹ Darrow, Clarence, *Facing Life Fearlessly* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1929. Little Blue Book No. 1374), 30

⁷⁰ *Is Life Worth Living?*, 43

⁷¹ Quoted by Fosdick, Harry F., "Getting Out of Us the Best That's in Us", *Church Monthly*, VII, 150 (June 1933)

⁷² *Facing Life Fearlessly*, 26

⁷³ *Walt Whitman*, 40

Life, like immortality, seemed to him to be built on hope, in this case, "the hope that tomorrow will be less irksome than today. For it is modified with the insistence that [there] is a purpose. Those who cherish such hallucinations forget that the all-loving power is inflicting tuberculosis." "Nature has but one desire, and that is the preservation and perpetuation of life. This is its purpose." "Luck and chance are the chief factors that really affect man." Life is "a ship on the sea, tossed by every wave and by every wind, a ship headed for no port and no harbor, with no rudder, no compass, no pilot, simply floating for a time, then lost in the waves. This is life, and I submit, it is all that science can tell us of life."

In one of his debates with Professor Starr, he declared that "all this thing that we call civilization today, is a bubble." "I think it is impossible to say that civilization has done anything to make life happier." He was on much safer ground when he confined himself to material progress, saying that in spite of this advance it is hard "to prove that [man] is happier, which to my mind is the best measure of whether we are getting anywhere or not." He tended to confuse civilization and materialism, perhaps because, as he wrote in his autobiography, "what some are pleased to call the 'material' world to me is the only world."

He believed that happiness should be the product of life, for life "is a balance between painful and pleasurable emotions." "Gather ye rose-buds while ye may" is the

⁷⁴ *Story of My Life*, 418-449

⁷⁵ *Crime Its Cause and Treatment*, 45

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 257-258

⁷⁷ Darrow, Clarence, and Starr, Frederick, debate *Is the Human Race Getting Anywhere?* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1925; Little Blue Book No. 911), 53, 21

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 46

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 27

⁸⁰ *Story of My Life*, 27

⁸¹ *Facing Life Fearlessly*, 27

whole philosophy for those who think ' But happiness is hard to find, and "from childhood on, life is full of pain and disappointment and sorrow The noble and the ignoble life meets the same fate " "

Many people believe that Elbert Hubbard neatly phrased a truth when he said, "Get your happiness out of your work, or you will never know what happiness is " " He prayed, "Give us this day our daily work " But Darrow denied the value of work for happiness "I never could bring myself to believe that love of work is a virtue The only reason that anyone has for working hard is to fix himself in a situation where he won't need to work " " The most he would say for work was that it is a drug or dope, when time passes unperceptibly while we are busy we are really non-existent, and "non-existence is the most tolerable of all life " To be absorbed in work he considered valuable because then "you don't know you are living " Work is "dope for life " "

"Is it at all necessary that a person should be of any value to the world " he asked in his autobiography He immediately answered the question in the negative "The justification for living is that you are alive and do not want to die If you cannot justify life in that way, then it cannot be justified " " He considered both work and sleep to be "dope for life," and of these sleep was preferable to him "The most satisfactory part of life is the time spent in sleep, when one is

⁸² *Ibid.* 29

⁸³ *Story of My Life*, 394

⁸⁴ Quoted by Felix Shay, *Elbert Hubbard of East Aurora* (New York: Wm. H. Wise, 1926), 171

⁸⁵ Hubbard, Elbert, "Theodore Parker", *Little Journeys to the Homes of Great Reformers* (East Aurora, Erie County, New York: Roycrofters, 1907), II, 60

⁸⁶ Darrow, Clarence, *The Ordeal of Prohibition* (Gard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1925 Little Blue Book No. 974), 57

⁸⁷ *Is Life Worth Living?* 28-29

⁸⁸ *Story of My Life*, 240

utterly oblivious to existence " " " "I do not fear death I expect to be even better off than as if I was [sic] working I expect to be asleep " " " In old age, he declared in a debate on the futility of life, "When I look back over life the greatest satisfaction that I find in any of it is when I am asleep " "

In a debate on prohibition with Dr Clarence True Wilson, he declared too pessimistically that repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment "won't come in time for me to get a drink under the law anyhow, and when that time is up I don't care what happens to what is left in the world, it doesn't interest me " " In debating the futility of life with Professor Starr, he declared, "To me life is of little value I don't mean to me individually, but as I see life I love life, but its everlasting uncertainty, its infinite miseries, its manifest futility, its unavoidable troubles and its tragic end appalls [sic] me And I am glad to take refuge in one consolation, which I think is philosophy, that life does not amount to much, and I should worry " "

7

In spite of his customary harping on the futility of life and his advice to the young to commit suicide, he wrote at the age of seventy-two that "as a propagandist, I see no chance to grow weary of life I am interested in too many questions that concern the existence and activity of the human race " " "I am far from sure that life is less desirable than when I was in my teens " " Although he usually derided work as mere

⁸⁹ *Ibid* , 36

⁹⁰ *Is Life Worth Living?* 56

⁹¹ *Ibid* , 42-43

⁹² *Should the Eighteenth Amendment be Repealed?* 4

⁹³ *Is Life Worth Living?* 62

⁹⁴ Darrow, Clarence, *What Life Means to Me at Seventy-Two* (Grard, Kansas Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1930 Little Blue Book No 1541), 12-13

⁹⁵ *Ibid* , 5

"dope," he once wrote that Voltaire "knew that constant activity was the only answer to the meaning of life. As Voltaire put it, 'Tranquility is a beautiful thing, but boredom is of its acquaintance and family' " ⁹⁶ He was quoted as saying, "Don't get the idea that I have not and am not enjoying life " ⁹⁷

Lincoln Steffens once commented that Darrow "thinks and often says that he is unhappy, but he evidently enjoys even his unhappiness " ⁹⁸ Another observer wrote, "Although one of his most familiar affirmations is that life is not worth living—which he upholds from a philosophic rather than a personal point of view—I can think of no one who has had a more interesting life " ⁹⁹ Walter Pritchard Eaton wrote that "his pessimistic philosophy of life is oddly belied by the gusto with which he has lived and fought " ¹⁰⁰ "Intellectually," wrote another critic, "he despised the life which in fact he enjoyed " ¹⁰¹ Heywood Brown was quoted as saying that "he makes life worth living by proving that it isn't " ¹⁰² Someone else wrote, "If he is pessimistic in his impersonal outlook upon life, it is not a crabbed kill-jov pessimism but a pessimism that in realizing the limitations of life is thereby the more impelled to use life fully within these limits " ¹⁰³ He himself wrote that "the pessimist don't [sic] necessarily think that everything is bad, but he looks for the worst. He knows it will come sooner or later. When a pessimist is disappointed he is happy, for he wasn't looking

⁹⁶ Darrow, Clarence, *Voltaire* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1925. Little Blue Book No. 829), 30.

⁹⁷ Quoted by Whitehead, 26.

⁹⁸ Steffens, Lincoln, "Attorney for the Damned", *Saturday Review of Literature*, VIII, 550 (February 27, 1932).

⁹⁹ Haldeman-Julius, L., *What I Think of Darrow at Seventy-Two* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1930. Little Blue Book No. 1541), 20.

¹⁰⁰ Eaton, *Current History*, XXXV, 791.

¹⁰¹ Lilienthal, *Nation*, CXXIV, 418.

¹⁰² Quoted by Whitehead, 6.

¹⁰³ Haldeman-Julius, 27.

for anything This is the safest and by all odds the wisest outlook " ¹⁰⁴

This was written in 1929, but he wrote in 1899 in his essay on Whitman, "Optimism and pessimism in their last analysis are questions of temperament They depend upon the eve that looks out, not upon the object that it sees The pessimist points to the sunset , and tells of the night that is coming on, the optimist shows us the rosy dawn Is the pessimist right or is the optimist right—does the night precede the day, or the day precede the night? Above the view of the optimist, who sees the morning and the spring, and the pessimist, who sees the evening and the closing year, stand a few serene souls, who look on both with clear eyes and tranquil mind, and declare that all is good The morning is right and the evening is right " ¹⁰⁵ When he wrote this he was on the way to the happy position which he described, but he grew dogmatic in old age and never rose above pessimism Yet he was a "cheerful cynic," and what Mr Touchett, Sr said of his son Ralph in Henry James's novel entitled "The Portrait of a Lady," might be said of Darrow He is a cynic, "but it's almost entirely theoretical, you know, it doesn't affect his spirits I have hardly ever seen him when he wasn't cheerful " ¹⁰⁶

He was "a cheerful cynic whose cynicism leads to understanding, tolerance, and humor," wrote an observer ¹⁰⁷ Another writer wrote of his "toleration that is rooted in an abiding skepticism " ¹⁰⁸ It is not skepticism but indifference which makes perfect tolerance, and Darrow's zeal precluded such tolerance The price for strong convictions is intoler-

¹⁰⁴ *Facing Life Fearlessly*, 31

¹⁰⁵ *Walt Whitman*, 46-47

¹⁰⁶ James, Henry, *The Portrait of a Lady* (*Harvard Classics Shelf of Fiction*, XI New York P F Collier, 1917), 6-7

¹⁰⁷ Gunn, John W, 'A Day With Clarence Darrow', *Haldeman-Julius Monthly*, July 1925

¹⁰⁸ *Haldeman-Julius*, 19

ance. Although another writer praised him for being "always tolerant",¹⁰⁹ although he once wrote a magazine article in praise of Republican Governor Frank O. Lowden of Illinois, for whom he would not vote,¹¹⁰ although he once described his tolerance by saying, "I wouldn't make a prohibitionist take a drink if he didn't want to",¹¹¹ nevertheless, Dr. Clarence True Wilson made a very keen comment when he said, "I point to [the life of] Darrow as a sample of the advantage of temperance and moderation, and to his speech as an example of the intemperance of prejudice against a new moral movement."¹¹² Darrow quoted Wendell Phillips as saying, "No one hates a reformer as much as another reformer,"¹¹³ and this is true of himself.

8

It was as the legal champion of the oppressed that Darrow exhibited his religion. *The Christian Century* admitted, "He has been a friend to some who have stood greatly in need of friends, a champion of under-dogs, and there is something akin to religion in that, even if he repudiated the term."¹¹⁴ Eaton declared, "In Clarence Darrow the breed of the Puritan reformers still lives, though at first glance he seems far removed from Puritanism."¹¹⁵ He himself asked many years ago, "Will the world ever learn what true religion is? Will it ever learn that mercy and pity and charity are more in the sight of the Infinite than all the creeds and dogmas of the earth?"¹¹⁶ "It is one of the errors of childhood to be-

¹⁰⁹ Lihenthal, *Nation*, CXXIV, 417.

¹¹⁰ Darrow, Clarence, "Frank Lowden, the Farmer's Friend", *Scribner's Magazine*, LXXXIII, 395-403 (April 1928).

¹¹¹ Quoted by Whitehead, *Clarence Darrow: Evangelist of Sane Thinking* (Gard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1933; Little Blue Book No. 1606), 24.

¹¹² "Should the Eighteenth Amendment be Repealed?" 11.

¹¹³ *Voltaire*, 37.

¹¹⁴ Garrison, W. E., *Christian Century*, XIX, 387.

¹¹⁵ Eaton, *Current History*, XXXV, 790.

¹¹⁶ *Realism in Literature and Art*, 45.

lieve in sin, to see clearly the division between the good and the bad. It is only life that makes us know that pity and charity and love are the chief virtues, and cruelty and hardness and selfishness the greatest sins."¹¹⁷ Speaking at the funeral of a friend, he declared, "If religion means creeds and dogmas, he was not a religious man. If it means specific belief in a supreme being, he was not. If it means a firm conviction of immortal life, he still was not, but if it means infinite love, gentleness, charity and kindness to all living things, [he] was the most religious man I ever knew."¹¹⁸

Thus was his concept of religion, and of himself he wrote in his autobiography, "I have always felt sympathy for all living things, and have done the best I could to make easier their lot. I believe that I have excused all who are forced to live a while upon the earth. I am satisfied that they have done their best with what they had."¹¹⁹ Although not long ago a prominent Presbyterian minister cried from his pulpit that Darrow's days "should be speedily numbered" because of his baleful influence, we should understand that Darrow has, by his life, given the lie to his words. He has lived religiously, although he has not talked religiously. He has been a man of action, even though he usually employed words in action, and his religion has been "a way of life."

¹¹⁷ Darrow, Clarence, *Farmington* (New York: Scribner, 1932), 252-253.

¹¹⁸ *Realism in Literature and Art*, 18.

¹¹⁹ *Story of My Life*, 449.

XIV

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK EMERSON AGAIN

1

IT WAS unconscious prophecy when, in Buffalo in 1878, a baby boy was baptized Harry Emerson Fosdick. He was named, not for Ralph Waldo Emerson, but for a chum of his own father,¹ the name Emerson was a coincidence, but it was portentous. For even though Fosdick was neither a Unitarian nor born in New England, he is the noblest living example of the liberal Puritan clergy. It does not seem extravagant to call him the finest exemplar of modern Christianity. As a religionist, he can stand beside Channing and Emerson among the best and greatest.

No living man exhibits so well the spirit of Emerson's Harvard Divinity School Address as does Fosdick, although he denies being consciously or directly influenced by Emerson.² Emerson declared in that address that "all attempts to project and establish a cultus with new rites and forms, seem to me vain. Rather let the breath of new life be breathed by you through the forms already existing. For if once you are alive, you shall find they become plastic and new. The remedy for their deformity is first, soul, and second, soul, and evermore, soul." To a tremendous degree, Dr. Fosdick has life and soul. It is as though Emerson had prophesied his coming.³

Perhaps the most appealing statement about religion that I ever heard from a minister was Fosdick's remark in a

¹ Letter to the author, May 17, 1937.

² Emerson, *Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1883, 12 vols.), I, 147.

Harvard Chapel sermon in 1931 "Religion is not a set of opinions, it is a scale of values" It was not the words themselves or the abstract idea behind them which made them impressive, as much as it was the reasonable passion and magnificent sincerity with which they were uttered, and especially the man who said them

In his sermon in 1933 entitled "An Inexpensive Church," Dr. Fosdick said, "Many people, discussing the relationship between Jesus' living and his talking, have been accustomed to say, He practiced what he preached That is not half the story Of course he practiced what he preached But turn it the other way round He preached what he had already practiced He practiced it first"¹ One feels when Fosdick speaks of religion not as "a set of opinions" but "a scale of values", that he is telling you what he has already proved to himself, that he practises before he preaches Nothing less than that can account for the warmth, depth and sincerity of his sermons In his volume entitled "As I See Religion," he wrote, "We defend religion too much Vital religion, like good music, needs not defense but rendition"² Dr. Fosdick is superb in his rendition of religion, and although he stays within the Christian fold, he succeeds in being original and creative in his rendition

2

As far as religion not being "a set of opinions" is concerned Dr. Fosdick long ago proved his sincerity He was born and raised and began his ministry in an opinionated church, but the great new Riverside Church in New York, of which he is the principal minister, is non-denominational not only in name but in fact

In his book entitled "Twelve Tests of Character," he wrote that "behind the churches stands the Church, and the Church

¹ *An Inexpensive Church* (New York: Riverside Church), 12

² *As I See Religion* (New York: Harper, 1932), 9

is not Anglican nor Methodist nor Baptist nor Presbyterian. The Church is the fellowship of souls who in the spirit have found God. Sometimes one discovers them inside the visible churches and sometimes out. The visible churches are the fallible endeavor to express in an institution, limited by human frailty, the need of man for God and the approach of God to man."⁵ In his sermon on "An Inexpensive Church," he showed himself aware of, and interested in Dr. John Haynes Holmes' idea of the Community Church, saying that "the secret of [the Riverside] church's strength is that it is not church-centered but community centered."⁶

In his sermon in 1928 on "Jesus' Appeal to the Irreligious," preached before his congregation had left its Park Avenue Baptist Church edifice for the Riverside Church, he said that "in our membership we never ask anybody to believe in Christianity. You can work your own theology without formal creedal subscription. You can come in with or without any denominational peculiarity or loyalty. But there is one thing we would like to stand for—the supreme asset of Christianity—Christ." In his book "As I See Religion," published in 1932, he wrote, "All theology tentatively phrases in current thought and language the best that, up to date, thinkers on religion have achieved, and the most hopeful thing about any system of theology is that it will not last."⁷ "When the modern mind hears the creeds upon which many of the churches still insist . . . the reaction is not simply incredulity, although incredulity is undoubtedly emphatic—but wonder as to what such things have to do with religion."⁸ In his sermon in 1930 on the question, "What Are You Standing For?" he said, "I stand for spiritual life as the interpreter of

⁵ *Twelve Tests of Character* (New York: Doran, 1923), 65.

⁶ *An Inexpensive Church*, 11.

⁷ *Jesus' Appeal to the Irreligious* (New York: Riverside Church), 18-19.

⁸ *As I See Religion*, 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

God and for Jesus Christ as the interpreter of the spiritual life There, I think, is a great credo in a single sentence " ¹⁰

William Ellery Channing could have said that Like Channing, Fosdick is not a denominationalist and creedist He might be called the Channing of the twentieth century He has started no new denomination, but Channing really did not do so either The Unitarians were forced out of the Congregational Church somewhat as Fosdick was forced out of the Presbyterian pulpit The difference is that Channing did not stand alone, while there is only one Fosdick

3

In the main emphasis of his ministry, as in his attitude toward new cults and rites, Fosdick has unconsciously followed Emerson He was consciously influenced in this emphasis, however, not by Emerson, but by Borden P Bowne of Boston University "

In his Harvard Divinity School Address, Emerson had said, "Jesus Christ saw with open eye the mystery of the soul Drawn by its severe harmony, ravished with its beauty, he lived in it, and had his being there Alone in all history he estimated the greatness of man One man was true to what is in you and me He saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his world He said in this jubilee of sublime emotion, 'I am divine Through me, God acts, through me speaks Would you see God, see me, or see thee, when thou also thinkest as I now think' " "Thus is he, as I think, the only soul in history who has appreciated the worth of a man " ¹¹ Dr Fosdick wrote in 1929, "Were one to select the special contribution which Jesus of Nazareth himself has made and is making to man's thought, one could do no better than to

¹⁰ *What Are You Standing For?* (New York: Riverside Church), 12

¹¹ Letter to the author, May 17, 1937

¹² *Works*, I, 127-128

call him the champion of personality " "Whether one really is a Christian or not depends on whether one accepts or rejects Jesus' attitude toward personality " " In 1935 he wrote, "All my thinking starts from _____ and comes back to" this principle "the key to the understanding of all life is the value of personality " "

In his sermon in 1933 entitled "Christianity More than Duty—Not Weight but Wings," he said, "Whenever we touch the sense of sacredness we are dealing with religion. Religion always has been saying about something that it is sacred—this mountain, this temple, this altar— and the genius of Christianity is that with this sense of sacredness it steps inside a man's life and says about personality, you are sacred, you are a temple of the living God, now are you the son of God " " In his book, "As I See Religion," he wrote, "All the superficial elements of orthodox Christianity [such as miracles, an inspired book, sacraments, prayer, philanthropic love, the deification, worship, and the second coming of the founder, and such matters], can, I think, be paralleled in non-Christian faiths. The genius of Christianity lies in reverence for personality " " "Jesus was the champion of personality and said his most scathing words, not against heretics, nor even against sinners, but against cynics " "

In his book entitled "Adventurous Religion," he wrote, "To change one's form of thought as new knowledge comes, to see the creative activity of the Eternal in terms of evolution instead of fiat, or to make the spiritual quality of Jesus, not a miracle of supernatural birth, one's reason for reverence—

¹³ "What Is Christianity?" *Harper's Magazine*, (LVIII, 554 (April 1929)

¹⁴ "When Life Goes All to Pieces," *The Power to See It Through* (New York: Harper, 1935), 35

¹⁵ *Christianity More than Duty—Not Weight but Wings* (New York: Riverside Church), 6-7

¹⁶ *As I See Religion*, 35-40

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 49

ing him—such things are not anti-Christ. The real Antichrist is to be found in another place. All irreverent treatment of human personality in individual relationships or social institutions—that is essentially anti-Christ. That is an utter denial of the Christian God and of Jesus as his revealer. Racial prejudice, social pride, industrial cruelty, war, personal selfishness and lust—these are the real sins against the real God, and they have one common quality: they treat human personality with contempt.”¹⁸

If there is one evil in the world which he opposes more than any other, it is war. In his volume on “Twelve Tests of Character,” he wrote that we were promised as a result of the World War, “pan-Christianity, pan-Americanism, pan-nationalism—and what we have is pandemonium.”¹⁹ In his sermon in 1933 entitled “A Plea for True Individualism,” he declared “War never has made the world safe for democracy, it always makes it ready for dictatorship.”²⁰ In his sermon in 1931 on “Personal Responsibility in the Present Crisis,” he declared that we should “never forget that behind all this [depression], from the crushing debts and reparations of Europe to the man next door who has not had a job for a year, stands the shadow of the Great War.”²¹

The climax to his opposition to war came in his famous Armistice Day sermon of 1933 entitled “The Unknown Soldier,” in which he said, “I have watched war lay its hands on these strongest, loveliest things in men and use the noblest attributes of the human spirit for what ungodly deeds! Is there anything more infernal than this, to take the best that is in man and use it to do what war does? This is the ultimate description of war—it is the prostitution of the noblest

¹⁸ *Adventurous Religion* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1926), 43.

¹⁹ *Twelve Tests of Character*, 211.

²⁰ “A Plea for True Individualism,” *Church Monthly*, VIII, 23 (December 1933).

²¹ *Personal Responsibility in the Present Crisis* (New York: Riverside Church), 7.

powers of the human soul to the most dastardly deeds, the most abysmal cruelties of which our human nature is capable " "I renounce war I renounce war because of what it does to our own men I renounce war because of what it compels us to do to our enemies I renounce war for its consequences, for the lies it lives on and propagates, for the undying hatreds it arouses, for the dictatorships it puts in place of democracy, for the starvation that stalks after it I renounce war and never again directly or indirectly, will I sanction or support another! O Unknown Soldier, in penitent reparation I make you that pledge " "

4

For Fosdick, emphasis on human personality becomes not merely philosophical but philanthropical. In his great pair of sermons in 1932 entitled "Personal and Social Religion," he declared that religion has both a personal and individualistic aspect and also a social aspect, and the two aspects are bound together. "Whenever we begin caring about the spiritual interests of individual souls, we find ourselves constrained to go further and face a social problem," and when we begin caring "about social reform and go clear through with it we come to personal religion " " While "social situations often do terrific things to individual souls, we need also to say that individual souls wield tremendous influence over social situations " "The war system is ruinous to the spiritual interests of individual souls That is true, but it is also true that the war system itself comes out of individual souls " "

If some one urges that religion must deal only with individual souls and not with social ills, he declared that "when

²² *The Unknown Soldier* (Washington, D. C. United States Government Printing Office, 1934), 6

²³ *Ibid.*, 8

²⁴ *Personal and Social Religion* (New York: Riverside Church), Part II, 3

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Part II, 5-7

anyone anywhere starts seriously to care for the souls of people, he is compelled to go on to care about the social situation." He turned religion from concern only with theology to recognition of sociology when he went on to ask the tremendous question, "How can a man say he cares for the souls of men when he does not care for the bodies in which souls are driven to despair?" Any church that pretends to care for the souls of people but is not interested in the slums that damn them and the city government that corrupts them and the economic order that cripples them and international relationships that, leading to peace or war, determine the spiritual destiny of innumerable souls—that kind of church, I think, would hear again the Master's withering words "Scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!"²⁶

In his great sermon in 1930 on "Christianity and Unemployment," he said, "When I meet a man who says that Christianity's business is the individual souls of men and that I ought not to meddle with social questions, I say, What do you mean, individual souls? Was not that evicted family, devastated in body and spirit under the very shadow of our own church tower, made up of individual souls? A man who talks like that would better test how much he honestly cares about individual souls. Individual souls of men who have wanted work as a drowning man wants air, and now stand whipped and humiliated in the bread line! Individual souls of children who care for their fathers as your children care for you and who night after night for months have waited with fear clutching at their hearts for the returning footsteps of a man who has been looking for work in vain! Individual souls of women who love their children as you mothers love yours and who have saved and starved in a desperate endeavor to carry on and now do not see how they can hold their families together any longer! Individual souls, indeed? What, pray, do you suppose that we who are concerned about the social

²⁶ *Ibid* Part I, 7-8

applications of Christianity are interested in anyway? Nothing but individual souls, personalities of boys and girls, men and women. But if we honestly care about them, by so much the more we care about the social situations that impinge so terribly upon them. How can a man care for individual souls and not care for society?"²⁷

Not creeds but deeds, not theology but sociology, not faith but works, is the thing! In his book entitled "The Meaning of Service," he wrote, "Many dubious problems concerning the Master's life and teaching baffle our inquiry, but one central fact stands clear in his eyes: uselessness was a deadly sin, and no permanence or greatness could belong to any person however eminent or to any institution however sacred unless it served the people."²⁸ In his sermon in 1933 on "A Plea for True Individualism," he declared, "No creed we could recite would interest Jesus in the least apart from this spirit: 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me'."²⁹

In his fine sermon in 1929 on "A Little Morality is a Dangerous Thing," he said that Jesus found some of the moral people like the Pharisees—people who obeyed only the letter of the law and forgot the spirit, who were censorious, harsh, narrow and unsympathetic—to be "some of his worst liabilities. We have long heard that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Let us consider. That a little morality is too."³⁰ "There are two major attitudes that one can take toward immoral people: the one indignant and damnable, and the other curative. When Jesus said that he was a physician, he meant something deep. There are few things more Christian than the attitude of a good physician toward

²⁷ *Christianity and Unemployment* (New York: Riverside Church), 8.

²⁸ *The Meaning of Service* (New York: Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1927), 29.

²⁹ "A Plea for True Individualism," 25.

³⁰ *A Little Morality is a Dangerous Thing* (New York: Riverside Church), 5.

his patient Does the physician approve of the illness? Upon the contrary, he has dedicated his life to getting rid of it Does he then chiefly blame the patient for being ill? No, not even if the patient is to blame His primary attitude is curative, compounded of a desire to understand and a desire to help 'I am a physician,' said Jesus 'I came not to judge the world, but to save the world' Personally, I must confess that it took me many years to understand this I shall never forget the day in my early ministry when a family brought a young boy to me He was a bad one And there I, with my little morality, sat and excoriated that lad, raked him fore and aft with my indignation May God forgive me! I was being moral Years afterward another family brought another boy to me He was a bad one Did I denounce him? No more than a physician would denounce a patient Back into that boy's life, to find out why he had gone wrong, back into that boy's life with a physician's fingers to gather up the scattered threads and enlist his cooperation in reweaving character out of them, back into that boy's life, to reproduce, if I could, a little of the spirit of Jesus—'I came not to judge but to save' " "

"Never was there a generation that called for such great morality You young men here today expecting to get your thrills from self-indulgence I challenge you to discover a new sin There are none But there is a new goodness To take this international neighborhood and make it into a brotherhood, to take this new world-wide industry and make it the servant of man and not of mammon, to harness the new science to human welfare, to banish with the new medicine ancient plagues our fathers prayed against but could not conquer, to open wide the doors of educational opportunity to every boy and girl born upon the planet—the only exciting thing I see on earth today is goodness But it must be a great

goodness. A little morality, conventional, repressed, censorious, individualistic, is a dangerous thing."³²

In his sermon on "Making the Best of a Bad Mess," he went as far as the religious humanists in putting responsibility on the individual. "Life is not what you find, it is what you create. So many people wander into the world and pick up everything they can get their hands upon looking for life. They never get it. What they get is existence. Existence is what you find, life is what you create."³³ In "As I See Religion," he admitted with the Humanists that "the influence of much of our popular belief in God is not moral but immoral. It means a lazy shouldering off on a kindly deity of tasks we must perform ourselves. It means stereotyped concepts of right and wrong, defined by stereotyped revelation and unadaptable to new demands. It therefore anesthetizes its devotees and checks instead of encourages creative thought on personal and social morals."³⁴

5

Much time might be spent in discussing various points in his theology. In his volume entitled "The Meaning of Faith," he wrote that he believes in a personal God.³⁵ In "Adventurous Religion," on the other hand, he used abstract terms in defining God as "Creative Reality."³⁶ In his volume entitled "The Modern Use of the Bible," he expressed belief in a kind of divine inspiration of the Bible.³⁷ But in "Adventurous Religion," he wrote that its "amazing literature came warmly up out of human experience. That is its glory and its strength. Touch it anywhere and you feel the pulse of men

³² *Ibid.*, 11-14.

³³ *Making the Best of a Bad Mess* (New York: Riverside Church), 5-6.

³⁴ *As I See Religion*, 85.

³⁵ *The Meaning of Faith* (New York: Abington Press, 1917), 73, 75.

³⁶ *Adventurous Religion*, 70.

³⁷ *Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 30.

and women in their joys and sorrows, struggles, aspirations, faiths, despairs. The whole book is 'blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity' " " He freely admitted that it is patently and ridiculously unscientific " In "The Modern Use of the Bible," he seemed to accept some of the miracles, " but in the same book he points out the absurdity and superfluity of many of them "

In the same volume, he seems to accept the divinity of Jesus " But in his book entitled "The Manhood of the Master," he pointed out Jesus' blend of oriental and occidental, and masculine and feminine qualities, as though he were analyzing a human being like ourselves " In his sermon in 1930 on "The Personality of Jesus—the Soul of Christianity," he said, " I do not believe in infallible authorities in religion—not church, or book, or person " " In his sermon in 1930 entitled "The Mystery of Life," he referred to Jesus as "a person who faced all the bafflements that you and I face, hated, deserted, crucified even, a person who was not saved anything that makes life often seem to us perplexed and cruel, and yet who through it all and above it all lived victoriously " " Could such a "person" have been very God of very God, infinite, immutable, and eternal? His attitude toward the nature of Jesus is not made wholly clear even when he wrote in "As I See Religion," "The gist of what the church has meant by the divinity of Jesus lies in the idea that, if God is to be symbolized by personal life, he should be symbolized by the best personal life we know. The interpretation

³⁸ *Adventurous Religion*, 94

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 96-97, 120-121

⁴⁰ *Modern Use of the Bible*, 162

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 34-35

⁴² *Ibid.*, 272

⁴³ *The Manhood of the Master* (New York: Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1913), 172-174

⁴⁴ *The Personality of Jesus—the Soul of Christianity* (New York: Riverside Church), 10

⁴⁵ *The Mystery of Life* (New York: Riverside Church), 14

of the spiritual world in terms of personality and the interpretation of personality in terms of Christ—that is in brief the summary of Christian theology”⁴⁶

Regarding prayer, as regarding the fundamentals of religion, he is clear. In his great sermon in 1932 entitled “Be Still and Know,” he said that “prayer is not so much talking as listening—as the Psalmist said, ‘I will hear what God the Lord will speak’ ”⁴⁷ Perhaps “in its essential meaning prayer is this—to ‘be still, and know that I am God’ ”⁴⁸ In “Adventurous Religion,” he wrote, “True prayer is fulfilling our relationships with this spiritual world. We can not create inward power any more than we can create our physical strength. We assimilate it. We fulfill the laws of its reception and it comes”⁴⁹ In “As I See Religion,” he wrote, “If we desire physical results we must fulfill physical conditions, if we desire mental results we must fulfill mental conditions, if we desire spiritual results we must fulfill spiritual conditions—that simple, basic, obvious fact would revolutionize popular religion if it once were apprehended. Let the pious trust God if they will, but it is fantasy to trust him to break his own laws. All supernaturalism is illusion. Even the pre-scientific New Testament says, ‘Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,’ which translated into modern speech means, I suppose, ‘Don’t fool yourself, this is a law-abiding world’ ”⁵⁰

In “Adventurous Religion,” he wrote, “At its best [prayer] dispenses with words and postures and becomes silent companionship with the Unseen”⁵¹ In “The Manhood of the Master,” he wrote, “Prayer is not primarily asking God

⁴⁶ *As I See Religion*, 58

⁴⁷ *Be Still and Know* (New York: Riverside Church), 9-10

⁴⁸ *Adventurous Religion*, 86

⁴⁹ *As I See Religion*, 120

⁵⁰ *Adventurous Religion*, 89

to do special things for us, prayer is never expecting God to alter his plans to suit our whim, prayer at its deepest must always be the soul's endeavor to open the way for God to do his divine will " " Finally, in his volume entitled "The Meaning of Prayer," he wrote, "Our petitions seem to us to be denied and we give up praying in discouragement, when the fact may be that God is suggesting to us all the time ways in which we could answer our own requests Many a man asks for a thing, and God's answer is wisdom sufficient to get the thing " " In other words, so far from praying for bread and receiving nothing, or a stone, a man may receive not merely bread but an idea¹

7

In his address entitled "The Folly of Half-Way Liberalism," Dr John H Dietrich, leading religious humanist, said that modernists or "half-way liberals" like Fosdick can use the terms "authority, revelation, salvation, sin, immortality, God—all meaningful terms in the orthodox faith, [only] with reservations So there is a loss of frankness in speaking, and a loss of clarity in thinking " " They stand "timidly between the traditional and scientific methods of interpretation, unwilling to accept either in its entirety Yet I am sure of one thing, and that is that liberal religion has no future save as it remains utterly faithful to the scientific spirit This means on the one hand that it must accept the conclusions of science in every department of learning, and on the other that it must use in its own particular inquiries the principles and standards of scientific method " "

¹ *Manhood of the Master*, 150

² *The Meaning of Prayer* (New York: Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1927), 118

³ Dietrich, John H., "The Folly of Half-Way Liberalism", *The Humanist Pulpit* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: First Unitarian Society), IV, 20 (1930)

⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 25

The first criticism, regarding the use of traditional terms, seems justified. In Dr Fosdick's theology there appears to be "a loss of frankness in speaking, and a loss of clarity in thinking." But in extenuation of this fault, if not in explanation, it may be pointed out that Dr Fosdick does not consider himself a theologian, nor is his primary interest theology. In his sermon on the question, "What is the Matter with Preaching?" he characteristically said, "Every sermon should have for its main business the solving of some problem—a vital, important problem, puzzling minds, burdening consciences, distracting lives—and any sermon which thus does tackle a real problem, throw even a little light on it, and help some individuals practically to find their way through it, cannot be altogether uninteresting. This endeavor to help people to solve their spiritual problems is a sermon's only justifiable aim."² If his theology is unclear and perhaps not wholly up to date, at least he seems to spend less time on theology and more on the ethical than do many Humanist ministers who consider ethics more important than theology in religion and in life.

As for the second criticism, that modernists stand "timidly between the traditional and scientific methods of interpretation, unwilling to accept either in its entirety," it might be replied that at least Fosdick and the modernists are thus as free from the superstition of science as from that of tradition. Since they do not accept science in its entirety, they are perhaps in less danger than the religious humanists of contradicting the science of the future. It is almost "mid-Victorian" now to trust absolutely in the findings of science, and who can tell what the scientific future may bring forth?

Fosdick recognizes the value of science for both theology and ethics. I have already quoted his plea to young men "to harness the new science to human welfare." Regarding the

²² *What is the Matter with Preaching?* (New York: Riverside Church), 5.

value of science for theology, he wrote in "Adventurous Religion," "When I look back to the picture that in childhood I had of God's creative activity and now think of this strange, terrific, adventurous universe in which I live, where from unpromising beginnings in which human eye, could it have been there, would have seen no spiritual potency, has come this amazing development crowned in aspiring character and hopes of a kingdom of righteousness on earth, not for the sake of science only, but for the sake of religion and the enlarged view of God, I would not for the world go back " " In "As I See Religion," he wrote, "The service rendered to religion by [science] is incalculable Not only in detail have great doctrines, like the reign of law, and revolutionary facts, like the new astronomy and evolution, calcined old fables and cleaned up a mess of rubbish in religious tradition, the whole method of science, its scrupulous care for facts, its painstaking, impersonal, objective insistence on getting at facts and their implications, has been inestimably beneficial Beyond all computation, science has improved the moral tone of religion " "

But, he continued, "We see our generation being hypnotized into believing that only the scientific report of the cosmos represents the truth To a religious mind, however, eagerly accepting that report but refusing hypnosis, it seems clear that a scientific description never tells the whole truth about anything, it gives only a partial, abstracted aspect of the truth Water is more than H_2O Water is rainbows and cataracts, dew, and stormy seas An automobile road-map of the Barbizon country may be scientifically exact; but no one could hypnotize Corot into believing that the picture which he painted of a Barbizon road-way was not also true " " For Fosdick, the important conflict between science

⁸⁶ *Adventurous Religion*, 127

⁸⁷ *As I See Religion*, 131

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 140-142

and religion lies not in the realm of theology, in "Adventurous Religion," he wrote "Quietly, but inevitably, man's reliance for the fulfilling of his needs slips over from religion to science. Not many men stop to argue about religion—but they have less and less practical use for it. God is not disproved, he is displaced."⁵⁹ "Science today is religion's overwhelmingly successful competitor in showing men how to get what they want."⁶⁰ He is opposed to the increasingly materialistic desires of men, which science has been forced to serve, rather than to science itself. He never falters in considering science a means to an end, while the religious humanists sometimes tend to exalt science as an end in itself.

Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes, eminent sociologist and historian, may be right when he wrote in his volume entitled "The Twilight of Christianity," "We can never have an intelligent and satisfactory modernized religion until the Jesus stereotype [by which he means "a mental image substituted for the reality"] is forever laid at rest. As long as our religious leaders revert to the doctrines of an antique mind, which was itself singularly uninformed, as the source of their inspiration and guidance, we are bound to remain in a period of religious confusion and stagnation."⁶¹

But when any man can discover such a wealth of wisdom in the life and teachings of any man as Fosdick does in those of Jesus, is "an intelligent and satisfactory modernized religion" impossible when it centers itself around them? Dr. Fosdick's intelligence, modernness, sincerity, warmth, and inspiring power seem to prove Barnes' assumption false, and yet

⁵⁹ *Adventurous Religion*, 138.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁶¹ Barnes, Harry Elmer, *The Twilight of Christianity* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1929), 375.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 407.

XV

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES COMMUNITY LEADER

1

IN JANUARY, 1922, Bishop Nicolai of the Greek Catholic Church of Serbia appealed to American religionists to save Christianity, which "is dying in the world" "Can not America give birth to the Church which will be so broad that all humanity can hear its promises, find its comfort, realize its perfect Christ-like reasonableness? I shall go further than to say that you in the United States are capable of producing this great boon for all humanity I shall declare my firm belief that you are now in process of producing it" "Let those of you who find existing churches narrow and cramping, build one which shall be broad and will not cramp!"¹

In January, 1820, almost exactly a century earlier, the sharp-tongued British author and critic, Sidney Smith, had challenged America to produce a real literature of its own, taunting, "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue?"² But Washington Irving had already published his excellent fictitious, whimsical and satiric "Knickerbocker's History of New York" in 1809, and in 1819 his "Sketch Book" began its famous career in both England and America

¹ Holmes, John Haynes, *New Churches for Old* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1922) xii-xv

² *Edinburgh Review*, January, 1820

Just as Sidney Smith's taunting challenge was accepted in America before it had been given so Bishop Nicolai's friendly and stirring challenge had already been accepted in theory when Dr John Haynes Holmes wrote his important book entitled "New Churches for Old" in 1921.

2

Not content with theory, however, Dr Holmes proceeded to carry the ideas expressed in his book into practice in officially turning his Church of the Messiah in New York into the Community Church in 1922. The Church of the Messiah, in turn, had evolved out of the Second Congregational Unitarian Society which had been founded in 1825. At the dedication of the first building of this old congregation in 1826, William Ellery Channing had preached his important sermon entitled "Unitarian Christianity Most Favorable To Piety." William Cullen Bryant wrote for that occasion his noted hymn entitled "Thou whose unmeasured temple stands." The Society had as members such noted men as William Cullen Bryant, the poet and essayist, Edmund Clarence Stedman, and Peter Cooper, philanthropist and founder of the famous Cooper Union.³

Dr Holmes was born in Philadelphia in 1879. His maternal grandfather was a friend and supporter of Theodore Parker and his undenominational Twenty-eighth Congregational Society in Boston. This fact is significant in its prophetic quality, for Holmes may quite accurately be termed the Parker of the twentieth century, not only because he also has freed himself from denominationalism, but also because like Parker, he is a humanitarian man of action as well as of words. Yet when I wrote to him to inquire if Parker's Boston congregation "might be called the first Community Church in America" and whether he considered that there was any relationship between Parker's Society and the Com-

³ *Community Church of New York* (New York Community Church), 5

munity Church of New York, he replied, "I do not think that the Theodore Parker Society in Boston could really be described as the first community church in America, as I think the community church idea has philosophical principles behind it which were not known in Parker's day. But I should call this society a forerunner of the community church movement, as Savonarola, let us say, was a forerunner of the Reformation. Certainly Parker was the supreme leader of the great movement of free religion of which the community church is today an expression. My church has no relation of any kind with Parker's society."

He was graduated from Harvard with a Phi Beta Kappa key, and received the S.T.B. degree from the Harvard Divinity School. He went into the Unitarian ministry, and distinguished himself while minister of a parish in Dorchester, Massachusetts, by founding in 1907 the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice.¹ Then from Dorchester he went to the Church of the Messiah in New York.

In New York, he has made himself an outstanding civic leader. In addition to leading his own large church organization, he has edited the magazine *Unity*, was one of the founders in 1909 of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, helped found the American Civil Liberties Union, was chairman of the New York Civic Affairs Committee, consisting of a group of public-spirited citizens interested in better government, has long been a vice-president of the National League for Industrial Democracy, and has been active in still other movements, like that for peace.

3

This varied personal civic activity is consistent with his plans for the Community Church, as sketched in the various

¹ Letter to the author, February 22, 1935.

² Preacher Without Authority—John Haynes Holmes," *Adventurous Americans* (ed. Allen Devere. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1932), 86.

publications of the church and in his volume entitled "New Churches for Old" Regarding this book, he recently wrote that it "gives the whole gospel of the work which I have tried to do " "

In "New Churches for Old," in presenting his concept of the community church, he began with his startling basic theory that the "separation of church and state has done more than any other one thing to paralyze the churches as instruments of reform, and thus robbed society of the tremendous ethical reinforcement which under other circumstances the churches might well have brought to the task of healing social ills It is a heavy price which we have paid for our boon of religious liberty The separation of church and state was a step in evolution which had to be taken, and when it was achieved, the greatest epoch in history began But it is not the final step " "

He would not reunite the state and the same old church He wrote that "there is not a single one of the denominations or churches which represents in its separate organic life anything that is remotely connected with the religious ideas and purposes of the present hour " " In the preface to the volume he wrote that "churches as organizations are an intolerable interference with the program of modern life, and are therefore to be transformed or replaced as speedily as possible " " Calling for "the reunion of church and state in the democratic era which is now before us does not mean that the church shall absorb the state, or that the state shall absorb the church It means rather that church and state alike shall be absorbed by the community " "

The community type of church, in fact, "is not a church at all, in the old sense of the word It is itself the community,

⁶ Letter to the author, February 1, 1935

⁷ *New Churches for Old*, 204

⁸ *Ibid.*, 24

⁹ *Ibid.*, vii

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 212

functioning in this instance spiritually, as in other instances it functions politically or educationally. For this reason we call it the community church, and define it in terms of its character as an expression of community idealism." " This would be the democratization of religion, just as public schools are the democratization of education. The community church "is simply the community gathered together on Sunday morning for the fostering of the common religious life of the people, as the town meeting [the State] is the community gathered together on a Wednesday night for the consideration of the common political interests of the town. The members of this church are members for the same reason that they are members of the town meeting—because they are citizens." " "A new Renaissance is upon us which makes inevitable a new and greater reformation. And the church of this reformation is the church not of another Luther or John Calvin—not of any man or bible or creed—but of the people. Democracy at last is coming into its own, in religion as in politics and industry, and the church of democracy is none other than this which we are now learning to call the Community Church." "

In contrast to the new community church, "the ordinary church is by its very nature a private and not a public institution, and is therefore concerned primarily with private and not public affairs. All of which means that the denominational church can never be an institution of socialized religion'. Its message can never be primarily a social message." " That is perhaps the greatest weakness of the conventional type of church. Although "theological discussion will flourish [in the community church] as it has not flourished since the great days of Aquinas and Albertus Magnus" nevertheless, "supreme over everything else

¹¹ *Ibid* 220

¹² *Ibid* 211

¹³ *Ibid* 244 245

¹⁴ *Ibid* 263

will be the social note" " " most important in the work of a community church is community service" "

In his sermon entitled "Is There a Right to Happiness?" he declared, 'I have questioned the right of a man to be happy in the present unhappy world. If there is any justification for such happiness, it is to be found in the use that we can make of it in the service of other and miserable men' " " In "New Churches For Old" he wrote, "We need a reformation, but a reformation in no such general terms as a restoration of primitive Christianity—a revival of simple love and brotherhood and peace. The new reformation must be a scientific affair. It must handle the business of religion as a technical expert handles the business of production in a factory or of distribution on a railroad. We want not only abstract ideals but concrete formulas—not only the *what* to do, but the *how* to do, as well. It means the mastery of the mechanics of love or fellowship as applied to landlordism, capital and labor, commercial exploitation, economic imperialism, international war. The Luther of our time will be a social engineer" " "

4

Probably no minister and congregation have come as near inaugurating this new reformation as Dr. Holmes and the Community Church of New York. If Dr. John H. Dietrich is the theologian of the religious humanist movement in contemporary religion, Dr. Holmes is its sociologist and political scientist.

In his important volume on the unscientificness and the evils of orthodoxy entitled "The Twilight of Christianity,"

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 261-262

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 270

¹⁷ *The Sensible Man's View of Religion* (New York: Harper, 1932), 69

¹⁸ *New Churches For Old*, 329-330

Dr Harry Elmer Barnes wrote that what humanism has done for the new theology "has been paralleled by the practical achievements of John H Holmes in the Community Church in New York City, which is the finest example of the new religion as a going concern" " "

Yet Holmes is not a thoroughgoing religious humanist in theology. He wrote to the author of this essay, "I count myself a humanist in religion from the standpoint of what I may call the method of my thought. That is, I begin my religious thinking with man rather than with God, and thus start everywhere from the humanist rather than from the theistic point of view. I believe we should start our thinking with man, just as religion itself started with human experience on this planet, and then go as far as we can toward God. It is in this latter respect that I go much farther than many of the humanists, since I believe in God. As a matter of fact, humanism by no means excludes theism" " " This last statement would be challenged by some of the humanists. In his address in 1935 on "The Providence of God. What is left of this Idea today?" he is surprisingly conservative. He answers his own question by declaring, "From the physical or material point of view, nothing, from the ethical or spiritual point of view, everything" ¹ The doctrine of general, or universal Providence means today that we are living in a moral universe, which can be trusted to endure. The doctrine of special, or particular Providence means that we are living in a spiritual presence, which can be trusted to abide. Suffer we may, and die we must. But in the Providence of God we shall not suffer in vain, nor die alone' " "

¹⁰ Barnes, Harry Elmer, *Twilight of Christianity* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1929), 459-460.

²⁰ Letter to the author, February 22, 1935.

²¹ "The Providence of God. What Is Left Of This Idea Today?" *The Community Pulpit* (New York: Community Church, 1935), 19.

5

In addition to its modernized Sunday morning service held in the Town Hall, the Community Church of New York holds forums, lectures and discussion groups on literary, economic, political, sociological and scientific subjects in the Community Church Center, 550 West 110th Street. These meetings are led or addressed by clergymen, business men, statesmen, and authors, such people as Scott Nearing, V. F. Calverton, Will Durant, Walter B. Pitkin, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Bishop Francis J. McConnell, Bishop Paul Jones, Bishop William Montgomery Brown, Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, Professor William Lyon Phelps, Dr. Edward Howard Guggs, Alexander Woolcott, Norman Thomas, S. K. Ratchiffe, Jane Addams, Fridtjof Nansen, Leo Tolstoy, Bertrand Russell, Sir Norman Angell, Harold Laski, H. N. Brailford, Josiah Wedgewood, John Langdon-Davies, Frank A. Vanderlip, Henry Morgenthau, Royal S. Copeland, Gerald P. Nye, Oscar DePriest, Glenn Frank, Alexander Meiklejohn, Zona Gale, Christopher Morley, Kathleen Norris, John Cowper Powys, Heywood Brown, Channing Pollock, Oswald Garrison Villard, Clarence Darrow, Lincoln Steffens, Margaret Sanger, Stuart Chase, Irving Fisher, Morris Hillquit, Norman Hangerood, Sidney B. Fay, Harry Elmer Barnes, Cailton J. H. Hayes, Carl Van Doren, Robert Moiss Lovett, Joseph Wood Krutch, Count Herman Keyserling, George Pierce Baker, and others. "

The Community Service Department of the Community Church is "a highly organized unit established for the service of the public and placed freely at the public's disposal."

"For example, it has organized a Good Will Court consisting of four panels of judges (physicians, lawyers, social workers, and business men) which undertakes as a free public service to hear and settle cases of grievance and dispute between individuals and societies." Also, "It has assisted in

recent years in work for better housing, clean streets, old age pensions, child labor reform, higher wages and shorter hours for workers, the solution of unemployment, and international peace " ²³

One of the "outside agencies of community service which are organized as separate corporations," is the Community Memorial Dispensary, with its "various departments of medical service, including General Medical, Surgical, Immuno-Therapy, Nose, Ear and Throat, Eyes, Gynecology, Podiatry, and Dermatology," as well as dental and x-ray ²⁴ There is also the Mental Hygiene Clinic, the first director of which was the world-famous Dr Alfred Adler, and his successor, the noted medical physician and psychiatrist, Dr W Beran Wolfe ²⁵ There is also "The Homestead, the church's summer vacation playground, [which] is established on an estate of forty acres, located at Crafts, Putnam County, New York " ²⁶

6

Dr Holmes wrote, in "New Churches For Old," that although the "most important [aspect of] the work of a community church is community service," nevertheless "theological discussion will flourish " ²⁷ The community church is undenominational in organization, non-sectarian in affiliation, democratic in membership, free from creed and dogma, social rather than individualistic in aim and emphasis, sociological rather than theological or even merely ethical, " but this does not preclude theology "It substitutes for the theistic, the humanistic point of view, for absorption in the next world, dedication to a better life in this world, for the church as a sacred institution, the idea of present society

²³ *Ibid* , 13

²⁴ *Ibid* 15

²⁵ *Ibid* , 16

²⁶ *Ibid* , 17

²⁷ *New Churches for Old*, 155, 173

as fulfilling the 'Kingdom of God'—the commonwealth of man." "The core of its faith, as the purpose of its life, is [in the words of Professor Josiah Royce of Harvard, in his volume entitled "The Problem of Christianity"] 'the Beloved Community'."²⁸ This sounds purely humanistic, but, as has been indicated, Holmes is not a thoroughgoing religious humanist.

"In most communities, at present, the community church is naturally and inevitably a Christian church. In its ultimate form, however, the community church cannot be a Christian church [for] such identification with Christianity would constitute a betrayal of the idea of religion as a universal instinct in human nature." "If it is to reflect with any accuracy the life of the community, it must recognize spiritually every citizen." "The Community Church seeks not to oppose Christianity, or to weaken it, or even to ignore it. On the contrary, it would receive it as one of the noblest and most beneficent of world religions, and build it into the structure of the new universal religion. The Community Church, so far from being anti-Christian, is to be regarded as Christianity plus."²⁹

Yet Dr. Holmes still considers himself a Christian. In his sermon entitled "If Christians were Christians" he declared, "Religion is not belief of any kind, though it has beliefs."³⁰ But in this sermon he hailed Jesus as the "greatest of spiritual teachers," and seemed to feel that a return to the teachings of Jesus would make the world right.³¹ This is very different from his previously quoted statement in "New Churches For Old," that more is needed than "a restoration of primitive Christianity—a revival of simple love and brotherhood and peace. The new reformation must be a scientific affair."³²

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 337-339

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 237-241

³⁰ *The Sensible Man's View of Religion*, 11

³¹ *Ibid.*, 13-24

³² *New Churches for Old*, 329

With the rather humanistic viewpoint of the last sentence, he described religion in his sermon entitled "The Sensible Man's View of Religion," as "the highest product of man's life, the richest deposit of his experience, the noblest creation of his genius

If there are bibles, he has written them, if there are saviors, he has bred them, if there are gods, he has discovered them" " In "New Churches For Old," he defined religion as "fellowship of man with men in the service of the common life" The Church and Bible and Sabbath and such institutions are not sacred "If there is anything sacred in the world, it is made so not by the tradition of some divine decree, not by association with some so-called holy day or book or institution, but by contact with some phase of human life Whatever serves man's needs, liberates his faculties, gives expression to the dreams and visions of his soul, is the work of his hand and heart—this is sacred" " "But if this is the 'sacred', what is left of the 'secular'?" There is nothing left All is sacred, or, from the orthodox theological standpoint, all is secular" " "

7

In his sermon entitled "Religion as an Opiate," he admitted that religion can "deadens or destroy the apprehension of reality," can make men dream and then trust in phantasy, can leave them to be rudely awakened and disillusioned by reality and experience, just as opium does But, he continued, there is another religion, "the one religion, which is truth itself" "The basis of this religion is reality—the facts of life unhidden and undisguised The power of this religion is reason, as developed by the scientific method of our time The goal of this religion is humanity enlarged,

³³ *The Sensible Man's View of Religion*, 4-5

³⁴ *New Churches for Old*, 126

³⁵ *Ibid*, 144

³⁶ *Ibid*, 150

redeemed and glorified in the experience of this present world" "This religion does not put men to sleep. On the contrary, it wakes them up to knowledge, aspiration, and human service." "Without flattery, it may be said that this is the religion of Dr. Holmes and the Community Church.

³⁷ *The Sensible Man's View of Religion*, 36

XVI

CHARLES FRANCIS POTTER SCIENTIFIC RELIGIONIST

1

WHEN, in 1929, there were founded two religious Humanist Societies, one by Charles Francis Potter in New York, the other by Theodore Curtis Abell in Hollywood, California, the trek from superstition to enlightenment was completed by some of the most radical of trained professional religionists. Of these two men, Potter is the more significant because of his writings, his activities, and his career. In fact, of all professional religious Humanists, Potter is the most conspicuous and important.

Yet Potter did not originate religious Humanism. Its originator, in so far as radical religious thought may be said to have a modern originator, is John H. Dietrich, minister since 1916 of the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis, Minnesota. He began his career in the Reformed Church, but so far from turning merely to conventional Unitarianism, he continued to progress. Potter wrote in 1933 that Dietrich "is usually credited with being the 'dean' of the Humanists, for he has been consistently setting forth the Humanist view in religion for at least eighteen years."¹

To Potter, credit is chiefly due for divorcing Humanism from Unitarianism. Dietrich holds that Humanism is a

¹ Potter *Humanizing Religion* (New York: Harper, 1933), 2.

² Dietrich, "The Advance of Humanism," *The Humanist Pulpit* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: First Unitarian Society, 1927-1933, 7 vols.), II, 39.

legitimate and "recognized interpretation of religion within the Unitarian fellowship"³ This no doubt is true, Unitarianism holds no formal creed Humanism is the radical wing of Unitarianism, comparable to conventional Unitarianism as Modernism is to Fundamentalism in most Protestant churches

Potter volunteers no explanation for his divorce from Unitarianism other than the vague statement that his whole evolution from the Baptist to Unitarian and Universalist pulpits to the Humanist position is "the development of a seeking mind"⁴ But it seems scarcely unfair to him to impute his departure from the Unitarian and Universalist fellowship to a despair that they can or will come "up to date" To borrow some of the phraseology of John Robinson regarding Luther and Calvin and their followers, many religious liberals consider it "a misery much to be lamented" that many Unitarians stick where Channing left them, for though Channing was a "precious shining light" in his time, "yet God had not revealed his whole will" to him Were he now living, he "would be as ready and willing to embrace further light" as that he had received⁵

Aside from the present Humanist movement, within as well as outside Unitarianism, there has been little theological progress within that church in the last century On the other hand, other Protestant denominations have been catching up If the Unitarian Church is to justify its existence in any form, either separate or as a part of the Free Church of America, which it has recently formed with the Universalist denomination, it must remain in the vanguard of religious liberalism Its failure to do so suggests that its conservative ought to reunite with the parent Congregational or Presbyterian churches, where they would once again be associated with large and important religious groups, and that its liberals ought to form new and wholly modern Humanist societies

³ Letter to the author, May 18, 1937

⁴ See *ante*, 11

Were it not that in many places, especially New England, many lovely, venerable, and historic churches would be disturbed by this arrangement, it would be a consummation devoutly to be wished

2

In the same year in which Potter founded the First Humanist Society of New York, Dr Harry Elmer Barnes, eminent historian and sociologist, published his significant volume entitled "The Twilight of Christianity" This book forms a good introduction to religious Humanism, for Barnes "believes that Unitarian Humanism will serve admirably as the basis for the religion of the future" ¹

In the early part of the volume, Barnes attacks "the orthodox religious complex" as "the most active and pervasive menace to civilization which confronts mankind today, compared with which war and poverty are unimportant incidental details" ² Barnes quotes with approval, except to qualify "Religion" with the adjective "orthodox," the statement of Professor Alfred N Whitehead of Harvard, "Religion is the last refuge of human savagery" ³

To Barnes whom religious Humanists in general follow in this matter, "There is a complete conflict all along the line between Christian Fundamentalism, Catholic or Protestant, and modern science" ⁴ "it is difficult to conceive of a more viciously misleading statement than Dr [Henry Fairhead] Osborne's pronouncement, to the effect that 'there is no conflict between science and religion There is none There can be none'" ⁵ Andrew D White, eminent president

¹ *The Twilight of Christianity* (New York Vanguard Press, 1929), 15

Ibid 41-42

Ibid 39

⁴ *Ibid* 305

⁵ *Ibid* , 368

of Cornell University, in his great work entitled "The Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom," held the opinion that only theology and not religion conflicts with science.¹⁰ But Barnes wrote, "If the activities of worship and the moral code growing out of the emotional basis of a religion are scientifically unsound, then there is as definite a clash between science and the religious rites and morals as between science and theology."¹¹ A clear example of unscientific religious ethics is the Roman Catholic opposition to birth control, even though scientists like the eminent Dr. Edward M. East, Professor of Genetics at Harvard, "predict a return to barbarism unless population growth is effectively checked within a century."¹²

Barnes wrote, "Modern civilization is like a man with one foot strapped to an ox cart and the other to an aeroplane." Although we are living in a scientific age, "our opinions and institutions are overwhelmingly the product or contributions from the pre-scientific era. Modern civilization is essentially a venerable parasite unintelligently exploiting the products of contemporary science and technology."¹³ The real problem facing modern civilization is to make this actually a scientific age, namely, one in which we would not only insist upon contemporaneous bath tubs but also upon intellectual attitudes and assumptions harmonious [and] up-to-date."¹⁴

When orthodoxy is not actually unscientific, it is anti-social, as clearly instanced in Barnes' statements that the "Roman Catholic Church was probably the strongest factor in defeating the child-labor amendment in the state of Massachusetts,"¹⁵ and that "the Catholic Parochial Schools

¹⁰ J, ix (New York: D. Appleton, 1897, 2 vols.)

¹¹ *The Twilight of Christianity*, 304

¹² *Ibid.*, 82

¹³ *Ibid.*, 24

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 81

are not only an economic and pedagogical liability, they are maintained in considerable part at the price of poverty and suffering on the part of the Catholic parents " " Yet, wrote Barnes, Roman Catholic clergy criticize public schools "in what would be regarded in a Socialist as a very 'un-American' manner " "

In short, Barnes concludes that "the total results of Christianity to date have been a decisive liability to the human race There is no doubt whatever that Christianity has actually produced more suffering, misery, bloodshed, intolerance and bigotry than it has ever assuaged or suppressed " " He quoted Kirby Page, "a Christian clergyman of great repute, and one of the most ardent living eulogists of Jesus," " who wrote, in his volume entitled "Jesus or Christianity?" "There can be no doubt that slavery would have disappeared centuries before it did had it not been buttressed by the support of the churches " " Barnes himself wrote in the same vein, "Nor can it be held that Christianity made any notable contributions to democracy " "Democracy was primarily the result of the agitation of the working-classes after the Industrial Revolution, and Mr Page and others have made it clear that, in the struggles between the employers and the employees since 1750, the force of organized Christianity has been thrown overwhelmingly on the side of the employers and of industrial feudalism " "

All this dooms orthodoxy, with its unscientific and anti-social dogmas and attitudes There must be "a reconstructed religion, worked out in harmony with our present knowledge of the nature and requirements of man in secular social situations " " "The implications of the modern scientific view in regard to man necessitate a reconstruction of our

¹ *Ibid* 90

¹⁶ *Ibid* 91

¹⁷ *Ibid* 415

¹⁸ *Ibid* 417-418

traditional concepts of the good life. Our judgments must be mundane and pragmatic. The good life for man is the best possible for him here and now from the standpoint of man's interest and capacity. Morality "is a field for the secular expert and must be handed over to biologists, medical experts, psychologists, social scientists and aesthetes."¹⁹ "Some leading social scientists contend that the divergence between the old supernaturalism and the new secular program is so great that no real common ground can be found. Hence, they argue that we should not contaminate and confuse the new secular type of ethical enterprise by denominating it Religion. The chief defense which can be made of the retention of the term religion, as applied to the new secular conception of a dynamic urge to social betterment, is that it will soften the shock of transition."²⁰

3

On May 1, 1933, was issued what is termed "The Humanist Manifesto." It was signed by eleven prominent college and university professors, including Dr. Barnes, and Dr. John Dewey of Columbia University, whom President Emeritus A. Lawrence Lowell of Harvard and others have formally hailed as "America's greatest living philosopher." It was also signed by more than twenty other leaders in editorial, literary, educational, and religious fields, including Dr. Potter and Dr. Dietrich.²¹

"The Humanist Manifesto" is a statement of fifteen affirmations preceded by a general statement. "The time is past for mere revision of traditional attitudes. There is great danger of a final, and we believe fatal, identification of

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 270-271

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 441

²¹ *Ibid.*, 445

²² Potter, *Humanizing Religion*, 1-2

the word religion with doctrines and methods which have lost their significance and which are powerless to solve the problem of human living in the twentieth century Religions have always been means for realizing the highest values of life "While this age does owe a vast debt to the traditional religions, it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a synthesizing and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present We therefore affirm the following

"First Religious Humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created

"Second Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process

"Third Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected

"Fourth Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture and civilization are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage

"Fifth Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values

"Sixth We are convinced that the time is past for theism, deism, modernism, and the several varieties of 'New Thought'

"Seventh Religion consists of those actions, purposes and experiences which are humanly significant Nothing human is alien to the religious The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained

"Eighth Religious humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now

"Ninth In place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer, the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being

"Tenth there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes

"Eleventh We assume that humanism will take the path of social and mental hygiene and discourage sentimental and unreal hopes and wishful thinking

"Twelfth Believing that religion must work increasingly for joy in living, religious humanists aim to foster the creative in man and to encourage achievements that add to the satisfactions of life

"Thirteenth Religious humanism maintains that all associations and institutions exist for the fulfillment of human life The intelligent evaluation, transformation, control and direction of such associations and institutions with a view to the enhancement of human life is the purpose and program of humanism

"Fourteenth The humanists are firmly convinced that the existing acquisitive and profit-motivated society has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted

"Fifteenth and last We assert that humanism will (a) affirm life rather than deny it, (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from it, and (c) endeavor to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for the few " "

4

The terse statements of the manifesto have been amplified and expanded in the writings and addresses of leading

Humanists such as Potter and Dietrich Dietrich is the systematic theologian of Humanism

The negative phase of Humanistic theology can be summed up in the statement attributed to the great Chinese religious sage and founder, Confucius "There are four things which are not necessary in religion—God, worship, prayer, and immortality" ²⁴ Negatively, then, Humanism is more than five hundred years older than Christianity

Humanists are agnostic regarding God, but they are not atheists They agree with Sir Francis Bacon, when he wrote in his famous essay, "Of Superstition", more than three hundred years ago, "It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such as is unworthy of him" ²⁵ Dietrich declared, in his delightful address on "The Religion of 'Green Pastures,'" "It is positively presumptuous of us even to attempt to define that which embraces the totality of being in terms of our own experience" ²⁶ Potter wrote, "Humanism denies the existence of any realm outside the field of cause and effect, and holds that what is called the supernatural is only the not-yet-understood natural The Humanist questions the value of worshipping the not-yet-understood It is too dangerously near to ignorance and superstition" ²⁷ In his address entitled "How the Gods were Made," Dietrich declared that we should not even attempt to define God, but he added that if we make the attempt the most modern concept of God is the "undefinable indwelling life of the universe" ²⁸

Dietrich does not, however, shrink even from atheism In his address on the question "Who Are These Atheists?" he declared, "Everyone insists that certain concepts of God are

²⁴ *Ibid*, 178

²⁵ Bacon, *Works* (Boston Brown and Taggard, 1860 14 vols.), XII, 135

²⁶ *Humanist Pulpit*, VI, 188

²⁷ Potter, *Humanism A New Religion* (New York Simon and Schuster, 1930), 33

²⁸ *Humanist Pulpit*, I

inadequate and unworthy, [but] the atheist goes one step farther and insists that every conception of God is inadequate and unworthy" ²⁹ In his address on the question "Is Atheism a Menace?" he declared, "There is no such thing as a belief in God aside from some particular type of God. I believe in something which no one else might call God, but which in my philosophy corresponds in a way to what the religionist calls God in his. But I do not use the term God, because it has so long been associated with certain definite types of personality that I do not feel justified in its use." "my attitude towards the idea of God is not that of denial at all, it is that of inquiry" ³⁰

In the address on the question "Who Are These Atheists?" he began on a note of indifference about the existence of God. "So long as one's philosophy is based upon an acceptance of this universe as a place suited to the pursuit of man's ideals, and upon a faith in man, in his capacity for continuous development in knowledge of the truth, in appreciation of the beautiful, and in love of the good, what matters it whether he believes or disbelieves in God?" ³¹ For the religious humanist, he declared in his address on the question "Who Are These Agnostic-Humanists?" "The prime task of religion becomes not the contemplation of the eternal, the worship of the most high, the withdrawal from this world that one might better commune with God, but rather the contemplation of the conditions of human life, the reverence for the worth of human life, and the entering into the world that by human effort human life may be improved" ³² In fact, he pointed out in his address on "Religion Without God," that humanism derives its name from the fact that, while theists "center their religion about the idea of God", he "shifts

²⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 9

³⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 19

³¹ *Ibid.*, II, 14

³² *Ibid.*, I

the emphasis from God to man" He quoted Cardinal Newman's definition of religion as "a knowledge of God and of our duties toward Him," adding, "That is theism I define humanism [as] the knowledge of man and our duties toward him"³³ He pointed out that Professor Roy Wood Sellars of the University of Michigan "tells us that religion has come to mean loyalty to the thing one values, and therefore may be naturalistic and humanistic as well as supernaturalistic and theistic" "³⁴

So far from considering atheism a menace, he charged that belief in God is a handicap, engendering moral laxity through belief in pardon, and endangering independence Atheism, on the other hand, "leads almost invariably to a high type of human service, for it usually results in a concentration of energy upon human affairs, and an estimate of conduct in terms of human values"³⁵ In his great address entitled "My Religion" he declared, "Human life has gradually arisen from crude beginnings through adaptation of form to improve itself, but that this human evolution betokens any conscious design or purposed end we cannot discern What the objective of human life is to be must be determined by humanity itself The outer world has nothing to tell us, the answer must come from within If human life is to have a meaning, we must give it that meaning" "If nature cares not for us, then all the more reason why we should care for ourselves and make life worth while, if nature is indifferent to all that we include in the true, the beautiful and the good, then all the more reason why we should conserve these things, if nature is destructive of what we term human values, then all the more reason why we should create those things which we deem of value And so my religion consists in the creation, the preservation and the sanctification of everything that

³³ *Ibid*, V, 1-2

³⁴ *Ibid*, V, 10

³⁵ *Ibid*, II, 30-31

makes for the enhancement of human life" "What if the universe is without purpose or plan? Infinite possibilities of purpose and plan are lying about us, from which man with his intelligence and aspiration can construct what he will" "

In his volume entitled "Humanizing Religion", Dr Potter wrote similarly that "the humanists are setting forth on a most ambitious pilgrimage definitely to make a religion out of human improvement When humanists dare to come forth and maintain openly that the improvement of human personality, individually and socially, is a sufficiently challenging task, a sufficiently worth-while object to make a religion out of, then the world is bound to listen This is our religion" "

5

With this attitude toward God, Humanists can hardly believe in prayer In his address on the question, "Shall We Pray?" Dietrich criticized the modernists who "no longer pray for material things , but continue to pray for spiritual blessings They do not seem to realize that one is just as unscientific as the other " With a too sweeping reliance upon science, he continued in the next sentence, "If cause and effect rules in one realm it rules in every realm " " Yet he himself postulated a mild dualism regarding the two kinds of energy, physical and spiritual, as will appear later To expect God to alter the cause and effect sequence, he continued, is "to expect that God is going to take one hand to deliver you out of the other " " He endorsed the ridiculous proposal attributed to John Tyndall of filling two wards of a hospital with identical numbers of sufferers from the same disease, one ward to be treated by physicians and the other

³⁶ *Ibid* , III, 74-79

³⁷ *Humanizing Religion*, 111

³⁸ *Humanist Pulpit*, V, 35

³⁹ *Ibid* , V, 46

prayed over by ministers, in order to prove the inefficacy of prayer "

Dietrich declared in the same address that "the popular notion of prayer is not only futile and senseless, but it is wrong and works evil To disregard the real means of accomplishing things and expect them to be done for us by some outside power, is to lose the opportunity for their achievement " "If this theory of prayer is true, there is no need of knowledge, of labor, of training, of care In the truest and deepest sense of the word, therefore, it is immoral, carried out logically, it would make life impossible " "

In a Thanksgiving address entitled "Thankful—For What and To Whom?" he said that man "has taken this bare old planet and transformed it into a living world Thus the original cosmic providence has been replaced by a human providence Our thanksgiving should be primarily an outflow of gratitude to Man " He was consistent, and for prayers in his church services he substituted what he called "Words of Meditation " In his address on the question "Shall We Pray?" he said of these "Meditations" "These words are not addressed to a deity and they are not in any sense of the word a petition On the contrary they are addressed to the people in the audience, and they are merely an attempt to formulate in well-chosen words our deepest needs and aspirations, to direct our powers to the attainment of our desires, and to express our relation to the universe as we see that relation " "

6

Humanists are agnostic in their attitude towards immortality as well as towards God, and, like Confucius, they

⁴⁰ *Ibid* , V, 38

⁴¹ *Ibid* , V, 46-47

⁴² *Ibid* , IV, 75

⁴³ *Ibid* , V, 47

consider the question of future existence to be equally unessential to religion

In his address on the question "Is the Universe Friendly or Unfriendly?" Dietrich asked, "if one's life on this planet has no value, why should it be more valuable if indefinitely prolonged?" "A rose is not valueless because its petals fall and wither." "In his address on "The Advance of Humanism," he declared, "Humanism shifts the emphasis from quantity to quality, and believes that it is better to live gloriously for a brief period than to drag out a meager existence through eternity." "In his address entitled "When Death Comes," he said, "To seek to live well rather than to live long—this is the secret of life and death alike." "In his address on the question "Shall We Believe in Immortality?" he said, "if I could lay down the conditions of future existence, then I can conceive of possibilities which would be more desirable than annihilation, but having no control over the situation I prefer the eternal sleep." He continued, like Clarence Darrow, with the disappointing questions, "And why not? Is it not true that the happiest moments of our life here are when we are asleep?" "This would be true if we were negro slaves or white share-croppers in the South, but not otherwise

Humanists believe, with Confucius, that spirituality is separable from belief in God, immortality, and the efficacy of prayer. In his great address on the question "What Does It Mean to be Spiritual?" Dietrich declared that "the origin of spiritual life is from within, and not as the old theology would have it from without." "Just as the life force in its lower form, developed out of the chemical and physical

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, V, 29

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, II, 43

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, VI, 52

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, V, 174

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, IV, 11-14

forces of nature by an unbroken process of evolution, so we see now that the spirit of man developed out of this same life force in its higher stages of fulfillment" ⁴⁸ Yet in the same address, he postulated a modified dualism when he said that "Physical energy is not the only energy There is another kind of power—that which we think of as the mental or spiritual life" ⁴⁹ In spite of this hint of dualism he concluded, however, that "the spiritual life today is not something separate and apart from man, which operates through him, but an expression of the combined functions of the human organism" ⁵⁰ "the spiritual is a term for activities concerned with the higher human values in all their manifestations" "The spiritual is nothing more or less than that function of human life which manifests itself in the more refined and delicate attitudes of mind" ⁵¹ "All the salvation that man will ever gain must be found within himself just as he is All the spiritual life that he will ever find, is the life that he is now living when developed to its highest and noblest possibilities This religious business, therefore, is a matter not of conversion, but of education, not of substitution from without, but of development from within To be spiritual is simply to be nobly human" ⁵²

7

Humanists take a critical view of the existence, nature, and teachings of Jesus Dietrich declared in his address on the question "Did Jesus Really Live?" that the fact that he may never have lived "in no sense detracts from the power of his significance Achilles, Ulysses, Hamlet, or Faust have just as much influence over the lives of men as if they had been historical characters . . . It is the vividness with which a character is portrayed to us which gives it reality." ⁵³

⁴⁸ *Ibid* , IV, 11-14

⁴⁹ *Ibid* , IV, 8

⁵⁰ *Ibid* , I

Dietrich is much more positive when it comes to the value of Jesus' teachings than regarding his historicity, but he does not grant his teachings supremacy in the moral and ethical realm. He pointed out in his address on the question, "Has Jesus a Message for Today?" that Jesus was not original, even in formulating the "Golden Rule."⁵¹ He even went so far as to declare that "not only was Jesus not the perfect teacher his followers claim him to have been, but there are flaws in his teaching so serious and menacing that not to call attention to them would be to betray the cause of human progress."⁵² Potter had the temerity to improve on Jesus' "Golden Rule,"—"help others in such a way that they may help themselves and others. That is the Humanist version of the Golden Rule."⁵³ According to Potter, neither the Christian, the Confucian, nor the Humanistic "Golden Rule" has anything in it "about God, or angels, or salvation, or baptism." It is "pure Humanism," unconnected with theism or theology of any kind.⁵⁴

Potter is not the only one who has improved on the traditional "Golden Rule." In his book entitled "An Ethical Philosophy of Life," Dr. Felix Adler, founder of the Ethical Culture Movement, wrote that "the supreme ethical rule" is to "act so as to elicit the best in others and thereby in thyself."⁵⁵ Modern religionists are no longer content, like Ingersoll, to point out "some mistakes of Moses." In the twentieth century, they proceed to point out some mistakes of Jesus, of which even the "Golden Rule" is one.

For Humanists, no person can embody a standard of absolute authority. Wrote Dietrich, "The standard of authority is not a book or a person, but the truth."⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, VI, 139

⁵² *Ibid.*, VI, 144

⁵³ *Humanizing Religion*, 166-167

⁵⁴ 208 (New York: D. Appleton, 1933)

⁵⁵ *Humanist Pulpit*, VI, 144

The early Protestants rejected the authority of an institution, the Church, in favor of the authority of a book, the Bible. Modernists reject the authority of both institution and book for the authority of a person, Jesus. Humanists reject alike the authority of institution, book, and person, for the authority of truth. They agree with Theodore Parker when he wrote, "Truth for authority, not authority for truth."⁶

In his address entitled "New Bibles for Old," Dietrich rejected the Hebrew and Christian Bible as insufficient for solving the complex problems of the modern world, saying, "We need to reach out everywhere and take the best that man has produced in every place and every time for our inspiring and consoling literature and if people will do this it will not only give them a Bible which will satisfy the mind and heart of modern man, but it will break down that distinction between so-called sacred and secular literature, giving the one an authority which it does not deserve and depriving the other of its opportunity to heal and to help." In his address on the question "Has Jesus a Message for Today?" he went even farther. After pointing out that "we must draw on all the wisdom that the past affords, not merely that of the Hebrew prophets or that of Jesus," he went on to declare that "all the past offers is not enough. We would resolutely face the moral problems of today and work them out for ourselves. We can find no short cut to their solution by turning back to an age forever gone."⁷

8

Science, rather than Christianity, is the main authority for religious Humanists. They say much in praise of science and of its indispensable value for religion. In fact, the entire

⁶ Quoted by Chadwick, John W., *Theodore Parker Preacher and Reformer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1900), 110.

⁷ *Humanist Pulpit*, IV, 112.

⁸ *Ibid.*, VI, 143.

philosophy of humanism is a consistent attempt to make religion square with science. In criticism, it may be asked if they are not merely making a religion of science.

In his address on the question "Who Are These Agnostic-Humanists?" Dietrich answered his question by saying that they are those "who use the experimental or scientific method with courage enough to [seek] knowledge regardless of the consequences to themselves or others, who are not content to live happily in a make-believe world." They are those who "insist that religion must be scientific, as completely so as any other realm of thought and endeavor." He declared that science, knowledge and truth should be sought as the best means for the best ends, "the great ends of human life and human welfare."⁵⁹

Indeed, in his address on the question, "Will Science Destroy Religion?" Dietrich said "Instead of being a thing [science] is only a method of dealing with things. It is the way—and I believe the only way—of finding the truth." On this basis, if science and religion conflict, so much the worse for religion, "while science will of course destroy certain types of religion, which are not founded upon actual facts, such as orthodox Christianity, science will not destroy religion itself. Not only will science not destroy religion itself, but it is the best friend that real religion has."⁶⁰ "Liberal religion has no future save as it remains utterly faithful to the scientific spirit. Science today is our teacher. Its method marks the one sure road to truth. We must follow this road straight through to the very end, though it seems to lead to chaos." "Our conclusion—science is merely a method of study, a way to the finding of truth. Religion is man's endeavor to solve the highest problem of human concern—the art of life itself. This problem can be solved

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, I

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 163-165

only as the endeavor is based upon the truth, as it is revealed by science. Therefore, man's hope is founded upon a reconciliation of science and religion—one finding the way in which he must travel, the other furnishing the motive for his progress " "

9

Humanists succeed in being scientific or sociological rather than theological in the difficult matter of evil and sin. In his address on "The Superstition of Sin," Dietrich said that sin is "simply another superstition which the world has outgrown." "Of course, people today are and ought to be conscious of wrongdoing, that is of transgression of the group morality, but in the doctrines of the Christian Church sin is not a synonym for vice " "⁶¹ He quoted with approval Harry Elmer Barnes when he wrote, "No act can be regarded as bad or harmful, no matter how ancient or deep-seated the religious tabu against it, which does not diminish human happiness and the beauty of life " "⁶² In his address on "The Superstition of Sin," he said that "there is no supernatural test of good and evil— wrongdoing is in its essence an encroachment by the individual upon the rights of his fellows " "⁶³

In his address on "The Life and Works of the Devil," Dietrich said that evil "is simply those natural processes and social activities and individual behavior which are horrible, unpleasant, undesirable to men. This does not mean that there is any such thing as evil in the universe, it only means that there are certain things which from the standpoint of man's welfare we call evil " "⁶⁴ In reply to those who asked

⁶¹ *Ibid* , II, 175-176

⁶² *Ibid* , III, 179

⁶³ *Ibid* , III, 185-186

⁶⁴ *Ibid* , III, 191

⁶⁵ *Ibid* , II, 77

how such a concept of sin and evil can be formulated authoritatively and effectively on a working basis, he replied in his address on the question "Is the Universe Friendly or Unfriendly?" that there is "no need to worry about the loss of authority for the ethical code. The sanction of the group which always has enforced it, holds just the same" ⁶⁶

In his address on "The Superstition of Sin," Dietrich said that "if a man does wrong today it is not because he is totally depraved [as many orthodox must believe], it is merely because he has not yet reached that stage of social consciousness where he is able to subordinate his own impulses to the good of human life. In other words, he is still controlled largely by the passions and instincts of the animal." "mankind shows survivals of instincts and tendencies which helped it in barbaric or savage times, or even in the prehuman stages of evolution, but are now classed as evil because they are anti-social. What we now call evil is the surge of these ancient habits and forces through the crust of civilization" ⁶⁷ "Salvation, therefore, is not a matter of being saved from any hell beyond the grave or from the wrath of an angry God or from any evil that lies before, but rather a matter of being saved from the animal inheritance which is behind. Man needs to be saved, not from his future, but from his past, not from any hell toward which he is moving, but from the hell out of which he is striving to rise" ⁶⁸

In his address on the question, "Is There a Moral Law?" Dietrich said, "There is a best, a wholly right way of doing everything. It is not for us to make this, to try to create it, we cannot make it or create it any more than we can make or create the forces of gravitation. We have simply to discover it" ⁶⁹ Science and not theology is our tool for discovering it

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, V, 29

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, III, 187-188

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, II, 106

10

Humanists are scientific not only in their understanding of sin and evil, but also in their proposals for remedying, or rather, preventing them

In his address on the question "What Are We Trying To Do?" Dietrich said that humanism "is sociological rather than theological. We preach not repentance but reform, not doctrine but duty, not creed but deed, not service before an altar but service among men." "I do not believe in having the Church take the place of the Prohibition Society or the League of Women Voters or the Labor Movement, but I believe in bringing it into fellowship with all organizations which are working for the suppression of evil and the promotion of virtue, whose forces should be supplemented by the inspiration of religion's motive power."⁶⁹ "I seek to make this [First Unitarian Society] not for the rich or poor, the learned or ignorant, the high or low, the laborer or the employer alone, but a common ground upon which all the different classes of society, believing in religion at all, can come together. Practically all the [other] organizations devoted to the fellowship of men, from the business men's Rotary to the laboring man's union, are limited to groups of like-minded people, and serve to separate rather than to unite humanity as a whole."⁷⁰

If this sounds like the "glittering generalities" which Dietrich professed to avoid, it may be pointed out that in his address devoted to the question "Are We Settling the Unemployment Problem?" he definitely urged higher wages, shorter working day and week, a permanent public works program, unemployment insurance, a coordinated system of employment agencies, and the reeducation at public expense of workers for

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, III, 8-9

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, III, 5-6

new jobs when their old ones become obsolete." He declared that "employment should be made a fixed charge on every corporation the same as rent, depreciation, and the interest on bonds " "

11

When the religious Humanists declare in the second point of their manifesto, that "man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process" and continue in the third point of their manifesto that "the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected," they appear to differ concisely and completely with the other great humanist movement of the twentieth century

The other great humanist group, which I distinguish from what I call religious Humanists by terming literary Humanists, includes in America the late Irving Babbitt of Harvard, Paul Elmer More, Norman Foerster of the University of Iowa, W C Brownell and others. These men say with Emerson, "God defend me from ever looking at a man as an animal " " They quote with approval Emerson's lines

"There are two laws discrete,
Not reconciled,—
Law for man, and law for thing
The last builds town and fleet,
But it runs wild,
And doth the man unking " "

The two humanist groups have a common emphasis upon the human, hence they are both called humanists. But they subordinate opposite elements, and since what is subordinated

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, V, 186-189

⁷² Emerson, *Journal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910-1914, 12 vols.), III, 221

⁷³ "Ode To W H Channing," *Works*, IX, 73

is as important as what is emphasized a wide gap opens between the two groups. The religious humanist would subordinate the divine and supernatural to the human. The literary humanist, on the other hand, would subordinate the naturalistic, animal, physical and material to the human. The religious humanists subordinate faith to reason, the literary humanists, emotion to reason.

Even in their emphasis upon reason and the intellect, however, the two humanist groups differ. They would both condemn Rousseau as an anti-intellectual when he wrote that "the man who thinks is a depraved animal." They both would object to the poet William Wordsworth's disparagement of the intellect as "the false secondary power whereby we multiply distinctions." But whereas the religious humanists would concede the value of the emotions for morality and ethics, though not for theology, the literary humanists object less to emotional theology than to emotional ethics and morality. In his important volume entitled "*Rousseau and Romanticism*," in which he traced what he considered the greatest evils and excesses of the twentieth century attitude back to Rousseau and his followers in the eighteenth century, Irving Babbitt wrote that Rousseauistic emphasis upon emotion at the expense of intellect in the field of morality eventually had the demoralizing result of making even conscience "an instinct and an emotion." It was transformed, in short, from "an inner check into an expansive emotion."

To this transformation, which seems to literary humanists so deplorable, is due humanitarianism. Literary humanists differ from religious humanists in their attitude towards it. Regarding the difference between humanitarianism and religious humanism, Dr. Dietrich said in his address on "The

⁷⁴ Babbitt, Irving, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 166.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

Growing Literature of Humanism", that it "is a more or less sentimental interest in humanity" while humanism is "a definite philosophical attitude toward human life" "

While able to agree with Dietrich's general definitions of both humanism and humanitarianism, Professor Babbitt is much more disparaging than are religious Humanists in his attitude toward humanitarianism. Religious humanism is more than humanitarianism, literary humanism is anti-humanitarianism. Babbitt wrote that the "person who has sympathy for mankind in the lump, faith in its future progress, and desire to serve the great cause of this progress, should be called not a humanist but a humanitarian. The humanist, then, as opposed to the humanitarian, is interested in the perfection of the individual rather than in a scheme for the elevation of mankind as a whole, and although he allows largely for sympathy, he insists that it be disciplined and tempered by judgment" ". To this, Ingersoll's reply might be made, that some people "mingle so much judgment with their charity that it is nearly all judgment" ". There is also Dr. Fosdick's statement, "Wherever we begin caring about the spiritual interests of individual souls, we find ourselves constrained to go further and face a social problem," and when we begin caring "about social reform and go clear through with it we come to personal religion" ". "How can a man say he cares for the souls of men when he does not care for the bodies in which souls are driven to despair?" ". "How can a man care for individual souls and not care for society?" "

⁷⁷ *Humanist Pulpit*, VI, 4

⁷⁸ Babbitt, *Literature and the American College* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908), 7-8

⁷⁹ Quoted by Kittredge, Herman E., *Ingersoll: A Biographical Appreciation* (New York: Dresden Publishing Company, 1911), 419

⁸⁰ Fosdick, *Personal and Social Religion* (New York: Riverside Church, 1932), Part II, 3, Part I, 7

⁸¹ *Christianity and Unemployment* (New York: Riverside Church, 1930), 8

The concept of virtue as inhibition, repression, an inner check, upon which literary humanists most strenuously insist, has been traced by Babbitt back to the ancient Hindu religious teacher, Buddha. Buddha, who lived in India about 500 B C, and was deified by his followers after his death, as was Jesus of Nazareth more than five hundred years later, looked upon spontaneous self-expression as the chief of all the deadly sins. "The opposite quality [termed] strenuousness,—the unremitting exercise of the active will—is the chief of the Buddhist virtues, [and] this Oriental strenuousness is directed toward self-conquest and not, like the Occidental variety, toward the conquest of the outer world."⁸²

Like Buddha, the great Greek philosopher, Socrates, who is still sometimes called the wisest man who ever lived, according to his great pupil, Plato, declared that "the counsels of his [inner] 'voice' were always negative, never positive."⁸³ The great Greek philosopher, Aristotle, considered by some to have been wiser even than Socrates, agreed with Buddha and Socrates that, in the words of Professor Babbitt, "a man ceases to be ethically passive only when he . . . begins to put the brake on temperament and impulse."⁸⁴ All these men, both Oriental and Occidental, agree that work is necessary for happiness. They further agree that, by work, is meant not "the conquest of the outer world" but rather self-conquest, self-control and self-discipline.

This exclusive emphasis of the literary humanists upon intellect in the field of ethics and morality marks them off from the religious humanists who, in turn, place emphasis on intellect in the field of theology. It also marks the literary humanists off from scientists, who lament more and more the results of too great inhibition and repression. In fact, it

⁸² Babbitt, *Masters of Modern French Criticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912), 349.

⁸³ Rousseau and Romanticism, 147.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 330.

might almost be said that at the same time that the literary humanists attack Rousseau as an anti-intellectual they show themselves in the field of morality and ethics to be anti-scientific, although science is a product of the intellect. They attack science because of what might be called its "outer-worldliness," its emphasis upon work not as self-control but as control over the forces of nature. As Professor Babbitt expressed it, to work in the popular modern sense of the word "is to encourage the substitution of a kingdom of man for the traditional Kingdom of God—the exaltation of material over spiritual comfort, the glorification of man's increasing control over the forces of nature under the name of progress," "the passage from the service of God to the service of man" ⁸⁵

In his volume, "Rousseau and Romanticism," Babbitt wrote, "To work outwardly and in the utilitarian sense, without the inner working that can alone save from ethical anarchy is to stimulate rather than repress the most urgent of all the lusts—the lust of power. A terrible danger thus lurks in the whole modern program. It is a program that makes for a formidable mechanical efficiency and so tends to bring into an ever closer material contact men who remain uncontrolled ethically" ⁸⁶. It "gives control over natural forces but it does not supply the purpose for which these forces are to be used. It gives the airplane, for instance, but does not determine whether the airplane is to go on a beneficent errand or is to scatter bombs on women and children" ⁸⁷. "Just this combination has in fact led to the crowning stupidity of the ages—the Great War. No more delirious spectacle has ever been witnessed than that of hundreds of millions of human beings using a vast machinery of scientific efficiency to turn life into a hell for one another" ⁸⁸.

⁸⁵ Babbitt in *Living Philosophies* (symposium, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931), 125.

⁸⁶ Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, 331.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 344.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 367.

Undoubtedly, the literary humanists have wisely diagnosed the modern attitude and put their fingers on one of its greatest weaknesses which will, perhaps, prove fatal. The question is whether their own attitude toward science is justified, or whether they are, perhaps, making science a scapegoat in a way similar to that in which Rousseau made society and civilization the scapegoat in accounting for evil. Perhaps, as was suggested by C Hartley Grattan, an anti-humanistic critic, "The remedy for the present situation is not less science but more science. The extension of the experimental technic into the human and social realm is bound to be the most fruitful adventure of modern times" ⁸⁹

12

With Grattan's dictum, religious Humanists agree. While the literary Humanists too greatly distrust science, religious Humanists perhaps trust it too much.

This is only natural because religious Humanism is a product of science and its future is bound up with science. Ingersoll said, "The religions of today are the sciences of the past, and it may be that the sciences of today will be the religions of the future" ⁹⁰. Religious Humanism might be defined as a religion which is not the science of the past but of the present and even of the future. Dr Moses J Aronson, of the Philosophy Department of the College of the City of New York, wrote recently that just as naturalistic philosophy, which includes the literary Humanists' pet hates of materialism, mechanism, and determinism, could not develop until after the middle of the nineteenth century when natural and physical science had attained its majority, so philosophy

⁸⁹ "The New Humanism and the Scientific Attitude," *The Critique of Humanism* (symposium, ed C Hartley Grattan. New York: Brewer and Warren, 1930), 33-34.

⁹⁰ Ingersoll, *Works* (ed C P Farrell. New York: C P Farrell, 1900. 12 vols.), VIII, 215.

of the religious Humanist type could not develop until there had developed social sciences, such as psychology, ethnology, anthropology, linguistics, anthro-po-geography, and sociology. Further, Humanism cannot become "full-fledged and authoritative" until such branches of philosophy as cosmology, epistemology, ethics, and esthetics are "reformulated in the light of the social sciences, and purged of their extraneous naturalistic as well as supernaturalistic ingredients"†

Despite the naturalistic ring of the third point of the "Humanist Manifesto," religious Humanists are not mere philosophic naturalists even though none of them are supernaturalists. They outgrew supernaturalism with the progress of the natural and physical sciences, and they have outgrown naturalism with the progress of the social sciences. Dr. Aronson wrote in criticism of naturalism that, although "man is indeed an animal, he is no longer the same animal he was at the origin of his species, man has been transformed under the accumulating influences of perhaps hundreds of thousands of years of his own culture into a new kind of creature. And this transforming influence may be ignored only at the cost of dealing with a biological-fiction rather than with a cultural-man." " Similarly, Dr. Ernest Sutherland Bates, formerly professor of philosophy in the University of Oregon, wrote recently that "human behavior is a form of animal behavior, but to stop there and fail to recognize the distinctive characteristics of the human animal is to stop at the beginning. The fact that we are not gods does not condemn us to be sub-human." " While the literary Humanists insist upon three planes of being, the supernatural, the

† "The Humanization of Philosophy," *American Philosophy Today and Tomorrow* (symposium, ed. Horace M. Hallen and Sidney Hook. New York: Lee Furman, 1935), 7-10.

91 *Ibid.*, 20.

92 Bates, "Towards a Social Philosophy," *ibid.*, 55.

human, and the natural, the religious Humanists concern themselves only with the two latter, the human and the natural

13

The fact that religious Humanists are not mere philosophic naturalists is made even more obvious by the facts that not only do they distinguish between the natural and human planes, but that Potter accepts what might possibly be considered a third and, perhaps higher level, which seems at present to be supernormal but not supernatural. This brings us to the present frontier of the social sciences, to the field including mental telepathy, clairvoyance, and psychometry. Potter calls it "extra-sensory perception," or "esping" for short.⁹¹ Despite many spiritualist charlatans, such perception seems to be an established fact.⁹²

Most scientists are afraid of this field, and some of the world's greatest scientists who have investigated it are looked upon as being guilty of class treason by their scientific peers. In championing this new kind of science, Potter, although a minister, has become, like Cotton Mather, the champion of science in the face of even some scientific opposition.

There is no doubt that this new field appears to run counter to materialistic science, but science has been growing less materialistic in several fields. The new science, in several aspects, appears at first sight so unmaterialistic that it has even been termed "the new mysticism." But when I asked Potter how rationalistic religionists can subscribe to so mystical a thing as "extra-sensory perception," he replied, "Extra-sensory perception is not in any sense a mystical thing. It is a scientific attempt to find out the truth about certain

⁹¹ Potter, "Has This Woman Supernatural Power?", *Liberty*, XIII, 16-18 (November 21, 1936)

⁹² Carrel, Alexis, *Man the Unknown* (New York: Harper, 1935), 55-56, *passim*

phenomena which many scientists dodge because they are afraid. For centuries there have been some manifestations of an ability on the part of some supersensitive persons to get information without the use of the ordinary five senses. Religious persons have interpreted these phenomena as evidence of the existence of God or spirits or devils. But Dr Rhine's experiments at Duke University have revealed that this telepathic sense is nothing abnormal but rather the indication of a new power in man, still to be charted and formulated. Twelve other universities are now experimenting in this field " "

The eminent English scientist, Sir Oliver Lodge, investigated and was convinced that there is some kind of extra-sensory perception, and among living scientists it has several outstanding exponents. Drs McDougall and Rhine at Duke University are convinced by their experiments. " Dr Alexis Carrel, research scientist in the Rockefeller Institute and Nobel Prize winner in medicine in 1912, admitted in his recent book that "some individuals manifest phenomena of clairvoyance" and telepathy. " The great British biologist, Julian S. Huxley, stated recently that extra-sensory perception might be developed until it was "as commonly distributed as, say, musical or mathematical gifts today. " "

Potter concludes that in extra-sensory perception there is "a power of the human mind which heralds a new age for man once we understand it. " "Then we shall take a long stride ahead in human evolution toward a better world. " " Science does not yet understand it, although science may be said now to recognize its existence. If such a development occurs as is suggested by Huxley, wrote Potter, it "would change our whole civilization. " Perhaps those who seem to have such percep-

95 Letter to the author, May 18, 1937

96 "Has This Woman Supernatural Power?" 18

97 *Man the Unknown*, 55-56, *passim*

98 "Has This Woman Supernatural Power?" 18

tion are "advance messengers of a new type of human being " If it became common, "and we learned the law underlying it and the technique of perfecting it," "scientific research would be put on a new basis, many of the mysteries of religion would be explained, prophecy would be re-established, all our present means of communication, including radio, would be rendered obsolete " *

In the same place, an article written for mass consumption, Potter wrote that many evils, including war, would become impossible if we all have extra-sensory perception "War is based on secret strategy Persons endowed with extra-sensory perception would be able to discover the strategy of the enemy War would be impossible if all plans were known Secret diplomacy would be eliminated Surprise attacks would end A dozen good espers would be worth more than a thousand spies " " There have been thousands of spies in the past, secret strategy has been revealed to the enemy, surprise attacks have turned out to be no surprise, diplomacy has sometimes been open rather than secret, but we continue to have wars And it seems to be a safe bet that we shall continue to have wars until human nature is changed even more radically than appears likely through extra-sensory perception This is not the first time that through discoveries there has come a vision of a better world, and it may not be the last time that a new discovery may be disillusioning

14

Theodore Parker believed nearly a century ago, that spiritualism might be the religion of the future, " and Potter believes that extra-sensory perception offers great hope for future progress But religious Humanism is not based on extra-sensory perception Nor is its aim, ideal, or goal neces-

⁹⁸ "Has This Woman Supernatural Power?" 18

⁹⁹ Commager, Henry Steele, *Theodore Parker* (Boston Little, Brown, 1936), 125

sarily involved in any way with this field of science, although, of course, the two are not antagonistic. Potter seems to many rationalists to be too enthusiastic about this new kind of perception.¹⁰⁰ This is not the first time that a "new type of human being" has been heralded, but human nature seems not to have changed or improved appreciably even over a period of thousands of years.

Fortunately, whether extra-sensory perception turns out to be a great instrument for progress or not, the Humanist program and ideal remain valid and valuable. To "make a religion out of human improvement" is enough and more than enough to keep us all busy eternally, whether we enjoy or do not enjoy the unproved blessing of extra-sensory perception.

¹⁰⁰ Dr. J. B. Rhine, although convinced by his researches that many persons have extra-sensory perception, is uncertain of its value and of whether it marks an advance or is a primitive survival. See his *New Frontiers of the Mind* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1937).

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